

SERMONS

ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS.

Man, the Creature of God.
Virtue the End of Man's Creation.

The Necessity of practising universal Virtue.

The Excellency of the Christian Morals.

The Wisdom of a Man.

The Character of the Disciple whom *Jesus* loved.

The true Nature of Relationship.

The Improvement of our Talents.

NABAL, or the Wickedness of a churlish Disposition.

Nathan's Parable, and the Effect of it on *David*.

Simplicity of Conversation.

Eliza's Case, and the Mischief of bad Education.

The Difficulty of Repentance, an Argument against Vice.

The Consequences of a right Belief of the Omnipotence of God.

The present State of Probation.

Advantages arising from a Belief of the Christian System.

To which is added,

A Critical Dissertation on 1 *Cor.* xi. 10.

“ For this Cause ought the Woman to have Power on her
“ Head, because of the Angels.”

With an APPENDIX. 32c

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MUSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

PREFACE.

MY chief intention in the following discourses, has been to inculcate the first and most important principles of True religion. Beginning with That of the relation we stand in to God, as his *Offspring*, and the obvious deductions from it of all the truths of natural religion. I have shewn that the end of the creation of man is moral happiness; and endeavoured throughout the whole to establish the certainty of this world's being nothing else but a State of Probation for a future Life of perfection.

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and glory. I have pointed out the duties and virtues, which alone can render us worthy of happiness in both; together with the great value of moral righteousness, as it is the imitation of the perfections of God, and the absolute Necessity of it in order to our acceptance with our COMMON FATHER; insomuch that if any pretended revelation should presume to vilify and blaspheme it, That alone would be a demonstration of its being an impossure. And I have taken particular care to enforce the necessity, and display the inestimable advantages of a liberal and virtuous education, whereby young minds may be inspired with noble and generous sentiments of God and Themselves; and be right-

PREFACE
by informed of the business they
have to do here, and the glory,
honour, and immortality they have
to expect hereafter. And in order
to promote their truest happiness,
and secure them from every misery,
I have laid before them the fatal
consequences attending vicious ha-
bits and practices.

The more fully to evince all
which, I have taken every occasion
to point out the great excellency
of the *Christian Morals*, which, in
the heat of our contentions with
Infidels and One another, I am
much afraid are less understood
than the Doctrines of Christianity,
how much soever we differ about
Them. Nay, from subjects which

PREFACE

at first sight may appear rather curious, than useful, I have drawn some moral instruction, that in all things I might lend my assistance towards the edifying of the Body of Christ.

This, I say, has been my chief intention upon the whole. But in the last Sermon of all, I have rather endeavoured to give a rational account of the distinguishing *Doctrines and Institutions of Christianity*, to instruct the serious Christian, to establish the doubtful, and to reconcile Unbelievers. And if this Preface should ever, by any means, fall into the hands of any sober Enquirer into the Truth of this Religion, I would desire him

A P P E N D I X

to read it in the fear of God, and to judge whether Christianity is not, in the light in which it is there taken, a *Rational* religion; being fully persuaded that the Objections made to Christianity, are not made to the Christianity of the New Testament; but to the Christianity of Ignorant and Enthusiastical men.

In short, I have endeavoured to shew religion, both natural and revealed, as rational, intelligible, and amiable as I could; rescuing it from those misrepresentations, which either lead people, especially the young and unthinking, to shun and avoid it, or drive melancholy and tender minds to despair. And I doubt not but those who pay a

VIII P A R T P A C E

due attention to its Doctrines and Precepts, when rightly explained and proposed, will find, that without it there can be no true happiness, and that with it, there need be no horror or gloominess hang upon the mind. My whole aim is the honour of God, and the Interest of my fellow creatures. Under which article of interest, I include the comforting them under any difficulties real or imaginary; and I have therefore every where display'd the unsearchable goodness of God towards all his creatures, in all their circumstances, and his readiness to receive into favour the Innocent, the Upright, and the Penitent.

Such

PREFACE. in

Such as these Discourses are, I commend them to the Divine blessing. I have been much misinformed if they have not done some service when preached; and I hope they may be still more useful, now they are made publick; and that when my mouth shall be stopped by the hand of death, I may be still administering through them, to the welfare and best interest of some or other of mankind; for all of whom I profess a sincere affection, and good-will.

I shall only add; that by publishing New Discourses of this kind, or explaining one's reasons for it, no reflection is intended upon those that are past, or vanity assumed, as

if

~~P R E F A C E.~~

if ours were more excellent. Every one, who knows the world, must observe, that different circumstances, different prejudices, and different ways of thinking, may require a different manner of treating Subjects, or arranging them. And it is undoubtedly the Duty of every Minister of Christ to contribute all he can to the universal Happiness.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THE reason of my adding the *Critical Dissertation* to these Sermons, is not, that it has any immediate connection with them; but because, it is more likely to be preserved in a Volume, than in a small Pamphlet. And many of my Friends, for whom I ought to have the highest value and esteem, have expressed an earnest desire that it might not be totally lost.

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HAVING been much out of Order while this Volume was in the Press, some Errors have escaped me. The Reader is desired particularly to correct the following.

ERRATA.

Page 27. line 5. for *hear*, read *bars*. P. 7. m. n. for *almirari*, r. *admirari*. P. 85. m. n. for *va*, r. *va*. P. 113. l. 13. for *also arises*, r. *also when it arises*. P. 118. for *every*, r. *whom every*. P. 181. for *that their genius turns*, r. *their genius turning*. P. 215. l. 4. dele the comma at the end. P. 222. l. 7. for *simplified*, r. *complicated*. P. 275. m. n. for *sup*, r. *sup*. P. 278. l. the 1st, dele *that*. P. 289. m. n. for *exfortis*, r. *exfortes*. P. 412. l. 2. for *thys*, r. *thys*. P. 470. for *Historica*, &c. r. *Bibliotheca Historica*.

SER-

S E R M O N I.

Men, the offspring of G O D.

ACTS xvii. 28. last clause.

As certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

IT is surprising to find what unworthy SERM.
conceptions men have sometimes form'd I.
to themselves of G O D, the first cause, }
and last end of all things, notwithstanding
his perfections are so plainly discoverable
throughout his works. The writings of
the most celebrated *poets* will afford us
innumerable instances of this kind; not
only their *poets* attributing to him, on cer-
tain occasions, the most infamous sensu-
ality and lewdness; but their *philosophers*
likewise, even in their gravest reasonings,
speaking of him sometimes with great dis-
fidence, and uncertainty; Insomuch, that
either a superstitious belief in a multiplicity
of gods, or else great ignorance of the na-
ture

SERM. ture of the one God, generally prevailed,
 I. where there has been no particular revelation from heaven. And yet one would imagine, the apostle's observation was the most obvious that could be, that "the
 " invisible things of him were clearly seen
 " from the creation of the world, being
 " understood by the things that are made,
 " even his eternal power and godhead." *

It is true, there are some nations of the earth, where men may be so little distinguished from brutes, by any thing else but their outward form and shape, that we are not so much to wonder at their ignorance. Indeed, the existence of some superior being is obvious even to them; but what perfections he is possessed of, they know not at all, because these cannot easily be deduced, or understood, without considerable thought and application, of which they had rendered themselves incapable by habits of sloth and inattention; being moreover without any friendly monitor to instruct, and guide them into a road of thinking. But, in more polite countries, such as *Ægypt*, *Greece*, and *Rome*, where men have distinguished themselves by their learning, fine sentiment,

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and accurate expression, this ignorance of SERM.
God is not so easily accounted for; because I.
reason and reflection will not only teach
that God *is*, but in a great measure *what*
he is too. And I believe *Athens* would be
the last place, where, if the story was not
handed down as in the chapter where the
text is, and rendered highly probable from
their own writers, we should suspect so
much ignorance and superstition*.

WELL then might St. Paul's "spirit be
" stirred in him when he saw *that* city
" wholly given to idolatry." Of which
nothing could be a greater indication, than
the altars they had erected; inscribed, ac-
cording to the best remains of antiquity,
" to the Gods of *Europe, Asia, and Africa,*
to THE UNKNOWN and strange God." And
this offered him the fairest opportunity
of instructing them in the true knowledge
of God, which he did not fail to lay hold
of; "whom, therefore," says he, "ye ig-
" norantly worship, him declare I unto
" you." But we do not find it had the

B 2

suc-

* For the particular and amazing superstition of the *Athenians*, let the reader consult the first scene of the third act of the *Wasps* of *Aristophanes*, with the *Scholias*; likewise many other places of the same author, and indeed their whole history.

4 Men, the offspring of God.

I. the seeming fair profession of their alters ; tho' his discourse was drawn from the confession of their own poets, that men are " the offspring of God." This passage being taken from the beginning of the *Phaenomena* of *Aratus*, the *Greek* poet :

But tho' the expreffion be *Aratus's*, the fentiment is by no means peculiar to him, but common likewife to many others : who call God fometimes " the father of " Gods and men," fometimes emphatically " the father ; " and *Orpheus*, or at leaft the author of thofe verfes in which his doctrines are comprehended, fays exprefely of him, that he is " the one felf-originated being, " from whom all things proceed ; nor is " there any other befides him.^b" From thefe and fuch like paffages, it is evident that *the heathens*, notwithstanding their *Dæmonology*, had the notion of the unity of the godhead among them ; which was taught by their *poets* themfelves, the great corrupters of their religion.

BUT,

² Του γὰρ καὶ γινώσκουσιν ὅτι οὗτοι ἀνθρώποις

ΔΙΕΥΣ. ΓΕΝΙΚΗΣ.

Azat!

Εκ δ' ἐστ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡμεῖς καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες.

Ουδ' εἰς τὸν ἔπαινον

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BUT, it is not so much my design, in discoursing on this subject, to consider the sentiments of *Heathens* upon it, as to shew the plain, natural, and obvious conclusions to be drawn from it; for, tho' it is expressed in the language of *the Heathens*; yet as the apostle has both allowed it as a truth, and a just and conclusive argument against idolatry, it would be a vitious prejudice to look upon it as the less sacred on that account. And I shall not confine myself to the apostle's inference, but carry it to a farther length than he had occasion to do, at the time when he introduces it.

THE apostle's inference is only this, that "forasmuch as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the godhead is like unto gold or silver, or stone graven by art, and man's device;" for if he were like to these, it is impossible he could have produced so excellent a creature as man, endowed with so many noble powers and faculties. But since, by the concession, he has produced him, he himself must be infinitely superior; at least, as much superior as man is to the work of his own hands. And therefore to worship him in the similitude of

B 3

that

SERM. 'that which is so much inferior to ourselves, is infinitely derogatory to the
 I. 'perfections of his nature.' And what reasoning can be more just and conclusive? For, as he goes on to observe, 'if God made us, he cannot stand in need of any thing from us, because it is from HIM that we receive all things that we enjoy,' and "in him we live and move, and have our being;" another expression which some celebrated commentators think is taken from an old *iambic* of the *Greeks*. An argument not only strict and conclusive in itself, but was much more so to them, because, "certain of their own poets had said, that we are also his offspring;" and is so full, plain, and determinate, that it will neither need illustration, or paraphrase—But, as we shall find it the first and fundamental principle of all religion, let us pursue it a little farther; and consider it not only with regard to the godhead; but enquire likewise,

I. INTO the dignity of human nature in this relation.

II. WHAT care we may expect of God from it; and,

III.

* Ζωμεν δ' ἐν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἀνομιέμεθα.

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III. WHAT duties it will require from us. SERM.

—And this is not to depart from
the use the apostle makes of it, but
only to enlarge and exemplify it.

FOR, whatever good and excellent qualities we have, the great cause from whence we were produced, must also have in great perfection; for it is impossible that any being can communicate what it never had itself. A right and just consideration of ourselves, in the first place then, will bring us to an understanding, in a great degree, of what God is. Not that we are to suppose, that he is in every respect like us: It does not follow, for example, that he is corporeal, because we have bodies united to our spirits; for *matter* is a great imperfection, bounding and limiting spirit and mind; which therefore would be inconsistent with his omnipresence, and other perfections: and our souls, originally made in the likeness of God, not our bodies, are to be called his offspring in the sense of the text; and it is the greatest honour and credit to our nature, that they are breathed into us immediately by God himself, and can in no sense be said to proceed from any other.

SERM. Now, if we look into ourselves, and
 I consider the powers and capacities of our
 souls, we shall find them to be worthy of
 this relation to God. For the mind of man
 is capable of very great attainments both in
 knowledge and virtue; can measure, and
 in some degree understand, the works of
 God by its own natural force and strength;
 and if it is under any more immediate in-
 fluence from him, what is it not capa-
 ble of?

It cannot with any pretence of reason
 be denied that we are the offspring of God,
 because we are at present very much cor-
 rupted and depraved, and therefore are un-
 worthy of, and unlike to, such a parent.
 For, tho' it be a very mortifying conside-
 ration that we are indeed thus corrupted and
 depraved, and are now rather the ruins and
 remains of what we originally were; yet
 from those ruins and remains, we may
 judge of the beauty, proportion and mag-
 nificence of the primitive building, and
 that we did not come out of the hand of
 God corrupt and depraved; that he either
 chose to make us so, or could not make us
 otherwise: But our corruption and depra-
 vity are of our own contracting; and there

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is no need of recurring to any suppositions, such as of seminal tradition from the parent, and such like, in order to account for it, and to vindicate the perfections of God, that he may not be supposed the author of sin; but all vice is to be fixed on the free choice of those who are guilty of it; and then it is very consistent with our being, in every rational sense, the offspring of God.

WHICH implies, as we are children of the most perfectly wise, just, holy, and good being, that we did bear his image; that we were ourselves originally made with some degree of these perfections; and even now, tho' we have corrupted ourselves, we are capable of reforming into a resemblance of him. It implies, that we are capable of improving every day in these good qualities and dispositions: For if we are the offspring of God, he will bestow upon us an education worthy of himself. And we find, in fact, that he has given us many helps and advantages for our improvement and instruction; and that many of his children have made great progress therein.

It is very much to the disgrace of human nature, that we too often consider ourselves

SERM. selves only as "the children of men"; which

I. we imagine implies imperfection and folly; and therefore willingly and easily indulge ourselves therein: Whereas we ought rather to consider ourselves as the children of God, and heirs of his kingdom; that this reflects the greatest honour upon our nature, and should fill us, if I may so call it, with a generous pride of being above the mean practices of those who would fancy themselves more ignobly derived. As we read in profane history, of *Cyrus*, and *Romulus*, and others, who were the sons of princes, but exposed to be destroyed by wild beasts for fear of their future ambition, and happening to be found by the neighbouring *Peasants*, and educated by them, they always discovered a mind, and engaged in actions, superior to the vulgar children with whom they associated; till at last they discovered their birth, and so obtained the government to which they were born. Thus ought it to be with the children of God, who should always shew something in their actions god-like and divine. Nor is it for wicked men to think that God is like to them; but it is the natural

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II

thral, genuine, upright mind only that is SERM.
“his offspring.”

L

LET us proceed to enquire,

II. WHAT care we may expect of God from this relation we bear to the universal father and parent of mankind.

AND certainly, it can be no less than every thing that is consistent with our moral and rational happiness, in all periods of our existence. Namely, his protection and providence over us in *this* world: And preparing an everlasting happiness for us in *the next*.

I. BUT then, with regard to his protection and providence in this world; it is to be considered, that we are placed here, that by proper trial we may acquire fitness for another world; and that therefore his dispensations towards us must be consistent with such a state of trial; and we are not in this life to expect absolute and compleat happiness, which is reserved only for those who have proper habits and dispositions for it, in the next. As, it is a very great weakness in parents, to bestow their favours promiscuously upon children, whether they be virtuous and obedient to their just and wise

SERMON, wise commands, or refractory and untow-

Iard; so, this placing men here in a state of trial and probation, in order to their being rewarded or punished hereafter, according to the temper and disposition of their minds, is very consistent with God's paternal care of mankind. For which reason, we are not to expect all those gratifications and indulgences, that we may wish for and desire. Children may very reasonably expect that their parents will provide them with sustenance, that they may find no fatal effects from hunger and cold. Nature and instinct teach them to apply for the relief of all their wants to their parents, sooner than to any one else: But no wise or considerate man ever imagined that parents ought, nay, that they might, grant them every thing which they thought necessary, or fit for themselves. It is the same with the government of providence. We may very justly and reasonably expect that it will furnish us with food and rayment *:

but

* This was the highest wish of one of the Patriarchs, the wisest and best men we any where read of. "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, and keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on; so that I come again in peace to my father's house: then shall the Lord be my God," *Gen. xxviii. 20, 21.*

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but it is very difficult to say, what else is **SER.M.**
absolutely necessary for us here below. **I.**

And in fact, we find, that God, according to the notion which the scripture gives us of him as a Father, provides all his offspring therewith; and, according as he sees it proper for the government of the whole, and the trial of particular persons, bestows upon some more, and upon others less, of the comforts and conveniences of life. And as the enjoyment of these is not the highest happiness we are capable of, so neither is the want of them any insupportable injury to us.

THE case is much the same, as it has been represented by some of the best writers both antient and modern, with the disposition of providence, and that of a dramattick performance. We are placed here to act several different parts upon the stage of human life. According as we act our best, we shall be rewarded hereafter; and it is as easy for the children of God to be content in the low condition of peasants, as to be humble and moderate in the exalted quality of princes. What reason then can any one have to murmur at the dispensations of providence towards him, and to think

SERM. think that God does not deal with him as
 I. a son, because he has appointed him one
 of the meanest characters of life? He
 should consider, that some or other of the
 children of God must act that part, in or-
 der to compleat the system he has plan'd.

BUT if we will, notwithstanding, look
 upon certain stations, as severities and af-
 flictions; let us consider whether we have
 not deserved them by our disobedience; and
 then ask ourselves, "What son is there
 "whom his father chasteneth not?" re-
 membring that we have had "fathers of
 "our flesh who corrected us, and we gave
 "them reverence; and that we should
 "much rather be in subjection to the fa-
 "ther of our spirits; for they verily for a
 "few days chastened us for their own
 "pleasure; but he for our profit, that we
 "may be made partakers of his holi-
 "ness." *

2. And this will lead us to conclude, in
 the second place, that God will provide
 suitable happiness for all his obedient chil-
 dren in another life.

THAT there will be another life, may
 reasonably be expected, from the promis-
 cuous

* Heb. xii. 9, 10.

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curious dealings of providence in this, to-
wards all men whether good or bad ; from
the natural evils of it ; and from the short-
ness of human life. For it is not supposable
from the perfections of God, that upon
the whole, bad men shall fare as well, or
better than the good ; or that God will
make a creature in his own image, to continue
but for a little while, and then to be cut
down and perish for ever. It is not supposable
that men born of God, should be “ but of few days,”
and those too “ full of trouble ;”^a and that often brought
upon them by their steady adherence to principles
of virtue, and acting up to the dignity of their
relation to *him* ; while the wicked controul, oppress,
and tyrannize over them, merely on that account : But
this world, which is our school and place of
education, must dismiss us, “ when the
“ time is come that is appointed of the
“ father,”^b when we shall no longer be
treated as minors, but as men at full age,
and be admitted “ to the inheritance”^c of
“ the children of light.”

AND these considerations will be considerably
strengthened from what has been said

^a Job xiv. i.

^b Gal. iv. 2.

^c 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

SERMON. said on the subject now before us; namely,

I. from the soul, which is the offspring of
 God, being capable of much greater improvements, than we have either time or opportunity for in this life; And, it is not to be supposed, that God has given us such noble powers and faculties of mind, only for such trifling employments as we are engaged in here below; but rather, that there is a more suitable happiness provided for us in a future state. And we, who are blessed with the christian revelation, have particular reason to be thankful, that he has therein given us express discoveries of everlasting life, and directed us what to do in order to obtain it: And thereby confirmed us in what is so highly probable from reason; that God has not provided objects suited to the desires and capacities of all his other creatures, and at the same time left man, his proper offspring, without any thing that has even the resemblance of happiness; as very little in this world seems to have. The obedient children of God shall one day be perfectly happy in the smiles of their father, and enjoy those "good things that God has laid up for them that love him."

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And from the same relation, we should SERM.
likewise learn, in the language of the prophet, "to fear the Lord, and his goodness;"^a which will direct that his obstinate and disobedient children shall be disinherited; and receive whatever punishment is consistent with the wise and righteous government of the whole system.

LET us proceed to enquire,

III. WHAT duties will naturally flow from this relation on our part:

I. AND the first, and most obvious, agreeably to what the prophet observes, that "a son honoureth his father, and a servant his master"^b is, that we employ the powers and capacities of mind, which we have seen God has given us, in his service, and to his glory; expressing, in the devoutest manner, the sense we have of our dependance upon him "for life, and breath, and all things, in whom we live, and move, and have our being;" Worshipping him, as the apostle says, "with our spirits, and not with our hands, as tho' he needed any thing, or was like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art,

C

^a *Hos.* iii. 5. ^b *Mal.* i. 6.

SERM. "art, or man's device:" Applying to him

I. for the supply of all our wants: Endeavouring to acquire those habits and dispositions of mind, which will raise us to the nearest resemblance of him: Showing our gratitude for the life he has given us, and the noble rank in the creation, which he has placed us in. And we christians have still additional obligations to this gratitude, "forasmuch as he hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of *Jesus Christ* from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by his mighty power through faith unto salvation."

2. This relation will require of us, in the second place, all possible holiness and purity of mind; our Father which is in heaven being free from all moral imperfection, and every thing whatsoever that signifies vice; beautifully represented in scripture, by telling us, that he "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." And from hence, St. *John* very justly observes, that "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him,"

^a 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

^b Habak. i. 13.

Men, the offspring of God.

19

“him, and he cannot sin, because he is **S E R M.**

“born of God.”

SHALL we then, on any temptation, forget our noble birth, and high original, as if we were rather in enmity with God, than standing in so near a relation to him? For the children of God to be “the servants of sin,”^b is, as if the son of a king, and heir to a crown, was to enlist himself in an enemy’s service, and take up arms against his own father; forgetting, or despising the kingdom he is born to, and sooner turning slave for hire, and preferring an inglorious death, to the most exalted, active, and useful station in life. In like manner, an impure heart and vitious courses will inevitably exclude us from the inheritance our Father has provided for us. In “his house are many mansions;”^c but if we continue in sin, we shall have no place in them. The “pure in heart” only “shall see God,”^d and be made happy in the enjoyment of him.

3. *Lastly*, **THIS**, that we are all equally “his offspring,” requires of us the most unbounded charity and kindness to the whole

C 2

^a 1 John iii. 9.
^d Matt. v. 8.

^b John viii. 34.

^c John xiv. 2.

S E R M. whole family of God, wheresoever, or how-

I. soever, dispersed over the face of the whole earth. It is from this relation that the scriptures have comprehended the whole of social virtue under that general expression of "brotherly love," than which nothing can possibly convey to us a more extensive idea; converting the common principles of morals, into those of true religion; the one, only regarding the convenience and utility between man and man, and what is right in its own nature; the other, considering them as the children of God, and referring the whole to him.

I HAVE not now time to consider it in its full force; but shall only take notice at present, that this should check the pride and insolence of men towards one another, that they are still upon a level as brethren; and it may be the poorest here, may be the most rich in faith, and an elder heir of the kingdom of heaven. And whatever mean parts any are appointed to act on this stage of life, they are the children and heirs of God; and as soon as their part is over, will appear in their Father's house in their own proper character. And the poorest object in distress has "an
" inhe-

Men, the offspring of God.

21

"inheritance among them that are sanctified," and will one day be in possession, and we shall not lose the reward of our kindness to him in this strange land.

S E R M.

I.

FROM what has been said, we see what a fruitful subject we have had before us; and how wonderful it is, that the Heathens themselves did not perceive the full force of their own observation; from whence the whole of natural religion is to be deduced: Namely, the unity and perfections of the godhead; the doctrines of providence, and a future state; and the duties of religious worship, of purity of heart, and of unbounded humanity and mercy.

AND, as all revealed religion must necessarily be founded on the same principles, we find our Saviour begins his divine prayer in like manner, addressing to God as "our Father which is in heaven." So perfectly connected are all the doctrines of truth. And if we would duly attend to this consideration, it would help us in a great measure to form right and just notions of most, if not all the subjects of religion. And particularly would discover the falsity of every doctrine, that instead of representing

C 3

him,

• *Act* xxvi. 18. • *Matt.* vi. 9.

SERM. him, thus, as a kind and indulgent father, would rather represent him, as a cruel, revengeful, inexorable tyrant; and give us horror at the very consciousness of existence.

On the contrary, the principles that have been advanced, display religion in so amiable, sweet, and comfortable a manner, as that without it, it will appear impossible to have any rational happiness. An atheistical thought will sink and depress our minds, like the loss of a tender parent, or of the head of a family which has always lived together in unity and harmony.—And from hence we shall never cease to add, from our hearts, all the other petitions of our Lord's prayer; particularly, "hallowed be his name; his will be done in earth as it is in heaven; for his is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever." *Amen.*

SERMON II.

Virtue, the end of man's creation.

ECCLES. vii. 13.

*Fear God, and keep his commandments;
for this is the whole duty of man.*

THE author of this book was the SERM.
wisest man, and the greatest II.
prince of his time, or of any other
either before, or after him: "Even Solo-
mon, King over Israel in Jerusalem;
who had given his heart to seek, and
to search out by wisdom concerning all
things that are done under heaven:"
Had entered into every scene of human life:
Had had much experience of wisdom and
knowledge: And, to enable himself the
better to judge of all things, had gone
through the whole round also of madness,
and folly: Had enjoyed pleasure; given
himself to wine; had gathered silver and
gold; and was great, and increased,
C 4 "more

SERM. "more than all that were before him in
 II. "*Jerusalem*; and whatsoever his eyes de-
 "sired, he kept not from him, nor with-
 "held his heart from any joy."

A MAN of such universal experience, we may imagine, to be the most competent judge of the true value and estimation of things. For, all this while, in the midst even of this libertine life, the gift of wisdom remained with him, enabling him to discern the nature of things truly, and to draw proper conclusions from every thing he either felt or observed. And wisdom led him to conclude, that every thing in this present life, considered as the only portion of man, was "vanity, and vexation of spirit." And how should it be otherwise? Man is here in a state of trial and probation for another world; and must meet with such accidents and disappointments as would render it a proper trial: Which end would be defeated, if every thing were smooth and easy, and there was no incitement to moderation, patience, and indifference to sensual objects. Now it seems absolutely impossible that so noble a creature as man, rational, intelligent, and capable of a more exalted happiness, could be

be designed only for things which give such SERM.
little satisfaction ; for sensual pleasures, to II.
heap up riches, or to engage in any other 
of those pursuits, to which the human heart
is apt to deviate from the paths of honour
and virtue.—What then, was he designed
for ? For a wise being must propose the end
of his creation, adequate to the capacities
he has given him.—There are but two
things in this world that he can employ
himself about, the objects of sense, or of
intelligence ; the gratifications of animal
life, or the sublimer pursuits of wisdom,
and virtue.

THE great and good Creator of all things,
makes nothing in vain, or with a design of
making it miserable. But there is both
“ vanity, and vexation of spirit ” attend-
ing all the enjoyments of this world ; for
which reason they cannot be the end of his
creation, but he must look out for one
more worthy both of his Maker to propose,
and of him to pursue. And after all the
search this wise prince was capable of mak-
ing into it ; and he spared no pains, nor ex-
periment, nor expence, that could assist
him to form a right judgment, he found
“ it conclude in the practice of virtue, or in
“ the

SERM. "the fear of God, and keeping his commandments; and that this was indeed

II.

"THE SUM OF HIS PERFECTION." For that is the true and critical meaning of the passage I have read to you; the word *and*, which may seem to give another turn to it, not being in the original, but unhappily, and indeed in any sense unnecessarily inserted by our translators; and it ought to have been rendered thus, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man," or as I have said, the sum of his perfection.

In discoursing on it, I shall

- I. ENQUIRE what the fear of God consists in; and how we may come to know his commandments. And
- II. SHEW that as they will be found to terminate in the practice of virtue, virtue is the end of man's creation; and an end worthy both of God to propose, and of him to pursue.

I. I SHALL enquire what the fear of God consists in; and how we may come to know his commandments.

I. AND, first, with regard to "the fear SERM.
 " of God," which is an expression often II
 used in the scripture to comprehend the
 whole of religion: It cannot be supposed
 that a bear fear, or dread of him, has any
 thing in it virtuous or praise-worthy. So
 far from it, that in this sense "the devils
 " themselves" are said to "believe and
 " tremble;" and is a mean and sordid
 principle; mean and sordid in its own na-
 ture, and can proceed from a regard to but
 one of his perfections, namely his almighty
 power, wrath, and vengeance. A princi-
 ple forbidden in the gospel, as contrary to
 the very essence, and inconsistent with the
 most generous principle, of religion.

Our Saviour tells us, that "the first and
 " great commandment is this, thou shalt
 " LOVE the Lord thy God with all thy
 " heart, and with all thy soul, and with
 " all thy strength." And St. John, his fa-
 vourite disciple, who had thoroughly en-
 tered into the genius of his master's pre-
 cepts, tells us "there is NO FEAR in love,
 " but perfect love casteth out fear;" for
 this reason, that "fear hath torment," and
 there-

* *James* ii. 19.

^b *Matt.* xxii. 37. 38.

SERMON therefore, "he that feareth, is not made

II. "perfect in love."

How then are we to reconcile these two seemingly opposite principles? For reconciled they must be, in order to do justice to the sacred language. If we attend then to the workings of the human passions, and affections, we shall find that one of these is the natural consequence and result of the other; as it is impossible to love any being, and not be afraid of doing whatever may give him a just displeasure. In the present case, when we consider the supreme Disposer of all things, as the most worthy and amiable being in the universe, possessed of every possible perfection, distributing unbounded favours to his creatures, and ultimately intending to make them partakers even of his own happiness; is it possible not to love him, not to desire his favour, and an interest with him? And can we have such sentiments of love, and desire towards him; and at the same time, have no apprehensions, no fear of forfeiting his favour, and incurring his final displeasure? Where that generous principle of love is strongest, the stronger also will that of fear be. As, a

son who honoureth his father most, will ^{St. Aug.} be more afraid of offending him, than one ^{II.} who has no such sense of filial affection.

AND we shall be the better able to judge whether what I have said be the meaning of the duty of *fearing God*, by considering the design of this passion as implanted in the human breast by the all-wise Creator, and the end it is suited to answer. Now, it is merely to prevent our running ourselves into unnecessary danger of pain, or misery or destruction, and so is the natural and necessary effect of self-love. But when it exceeds the bounds of reason, and becomes excessive, it degenerates into the basest, and most unmanly of all dispositions, that of cowardice; as when it leads us to decline a proper behaviour, on account of any pain or uneasiness consequent upon it, whether real or imaginary.

IN the same manner, there may be a fear of God, which is cowardly and base: Namely, when it leads us to think him a rigorous and inexorable being, not pleased with the rational services of his creatures, but determined to punish them, merely for the sake of showing his own power, and the strength of his almighty arm. Such
sen-

SERM. sentiments of God, and superstitious, enthusiastic practices in consequence of them,
 II. are no religious fear, such as is required in the text, but is ignorance and cowardice. This is the sense in which St. *John* says, as I have just now observed, "there is no "fear in love;" as is evident from the reason he gives for it, namely, "because "fear hath torment."

I HAVE made these observations the rather, because we see many weak christians who have such a superstitious fear of God on their minds, that they are jealous he is offended even with their most innocent actions, such as he is perfectly well-pleased with, nay with those very things that have the greatest moral fitness and propriety in them, and are in truth the very imitation of his own perfections. But principles which thus tend to enslave the mind, making men "all their life-time subject to "bondage," are the highest affront to the best of beings, who has made us merely to extend his loving-kindness to us, and takes well at our hands whatever, after an impartial inquiry into our duty, we mean well. And therefore this fear of God, like the love of him, will be found to consist

in keeping his commandments. But "his *commandments*," we are expressly told, *are not grievous*;" consequently a proper fear of him has nothing of pain or uneasiness in it; and only tends to keep us within the bounds of our duty: Consisting in such sublime sentiments of him, as naturally fill the mind with a noble and generous awe and reverence. A passion so elevated, that it is reckoned one of the greatest perfections of genius and wit, to be able to raise it by artifice and fiction.

AND that is indeed the true meaning of the *Hebrew* word here translated *fear*. And had our translators constantly rendered it *REVERE God*; it had prevented much nonsense and absurdity that have been talked on the subject, and saved us the trouble of most of the observations we have been attending to.

2. IN order, then, to distinguish when the fear of God is genuine, and when it is superstitious, it will be necessary to enquire into what *Solomon* subjoins in the text, namely, "the commandments of God," so that we may come both to know, and "to keep them." "Fear God, and keep

"his

SERM. "his commandments, for this is the

II. "WHOLE of man." And I hope to make
 this question as plain to every reasonable
 person as the other.

THE commandments of God, then, are
 twofold; those which the apostle says, are
 "written in our hearts;" and those which
 are explained to us, or positively enjoined,
 by revelation.

THAT God Almighty has revealed him-
 self to man, by various gradations, from
 the first pair in paradise, down to the last
 and most perfect period of revelation which
 we christians have the happiness to enjoy;
 no one who believes in revelation at all, or
 has attended to the several dispensations of
 it in the *Old* and *New Testament*, will be
 able to deny. But the history of the world
 makes it as evident, that there have been
 large and populous countries, which have
 been entirely cut off from the benefit of it.
 To what else can the silly, absurd, and
 barbarous rites of *Gentile* idolatry be ow-
 ing? Now, though idolatry took its ori-
 ginal rise from a vitious departure from the
 knowledge of the true God, as plainly
 deducible from unerring principles of reason,
 and

and the communications of God to the **SARR.** Patriarchs and Prophets, "not liking," **II.** as the apostle says, "to retain God in their knowledge,"^a and was therefore deservedly punished by the judgments poured out upon the *Gentile* world, particularly in withdrawing the light of revelation from them; yet their descendants, notwithstanding that great disadvantage, are supposed in the gospel, to have been, and consequently all the rest of mankind might have been, able to know the commandments of God by the light of nature.

THIS is put out of all question by the gospel itself. St. *John* tells us, that "sin" is a transgression of the law;^b and St. *Paul* says, "where no law is, there is no transgression,"^c and consequently, in strict justice and righteousness there can be no punishment. And yet it is plain, that the Heathens are punishable for their vices; which could not be, if the law of reason and nature were not a proper guide to mankind. To justify the divine proceedings then, in this case, St. *Paul* observes in another place, that "the *Gentiles* which have not the law," that is, no written, or re-

D vealed

^a Rom. i. 28.^b 1 John iii. 4.^c Rom. iv. 15.

SERM. vealed law, "do by nature the things con-

II. "tained in the law; these having not the

~ "law, are a law unto themselves, which
 "show the works of the law written in
 "their hearts, their conscience also bear-
 "ing witness, and their thoughts the mean-
 "while accusing, or else excusing one ano-
 "ther." "

If it be asked, to what purpose I men-
 tion this in a christian assembly, who have
 a written law, and the testimony of revela-
 tion, to recur to in all cases; I answer,

1st, BECAUSE it is itself the doctrine of
 revelation, which previously supposes men
 to be well instructed in the sacred, eternal,
 and unalterable difference and reason of
 things. On what other principle could
Abraham expostulate with God himself,
 "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do
 "right?" "Or the apostle exhort us,
 "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever
 "things are honest, whatsoever things are
 "just, whatsoever things are pure, whatso-
 "ever things are lovely, whatsoever things
 "are of good report; if there be any virtue,
 "and if there be any praise, to think on
 "those things"; or, as the original word
 more

more exactly signifies, *to reason* on them, **SERM.**
draw proper conclusions from them, and **II.**
carry them to their utmost extent? 

BUT, *2dly*, and chiefly; I mention it by way of the most serious and earnest caution, not to satisfy ourselves in the practice of any vice, or in the omission of any duty of morality, because we may imagin that we cannot find an immediate and direct passage of scripture, to dissuade us from the one, or exhort us to the other. For, the writers of revelation deal in general terms; and leave particulars, for the most part, to our own reasoning, and the conviction of our own consciences.

AND I mention it likewise, *3dly*, to show a consistency, and harmony in the divine proceedings; which could not be, if there were not a proper law for every rational creature.

So that to keep the commandments of God, is to perform those duties which naturally arise from the circumstances God has here stationed us in, considered in all their relations; whether such duties are particularly enjoined by revelation, or only

D 2 de-

* See Sermon the fourth on that text.

SERM. deducible from the general principles of

II. right and fitness, on which revelation is founded. In short, it consists in the whole of virtue, however deducible, or by whatever means it may be taught.—I shall only add, that in order to judge of this, it is necessary to consider, not only what we ourselves, who perhaps are prejudiced in favour of our own inclinations and passions, may think of it, but what have been the determinations and conclusions of all wise men, in all ages, and in their most sober, calm, and disinterested judgments; and what we ourselves should think of it, if we were to determine for another.

THUS we see, that "to fear God," and "to keep his commandments," result finally in one and the same thing; namely, in the universal, and unbounded practice of virtue. Which the prophet describes by "doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God;" and the writers of the *New Testament*, "by living soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world."

II. I PROCEED to the second thing I proposed, namely, to show, that this is the

^a Mic. vi. 8.

^b Tit. ii. 12.

the whole design of the creation, and ought to be the sole pursuit of man; and is, according to the true meaning of the text, the sum of his perfection; and the end worthy of God to propose, and worthy of him to pursue.

1st, THE design of making man, was, that he might enjoy a moral and rational happiness. God has made no one with a view to make him miserable; but every reasonable creature may be finally happy, if it is not his own fault. I say *finally* happy; because there is a great deal of unavoidable "vanity and vexation of spirit," as the author of my text observes, in this world, for our trial; that a proper behaviour under it may lead us to perfection, and consequently to happiness. But there can be no such thing as either perfection or happiness, without the fear of God, and keeping his commandments, as I have explained them; which raise us to a resemblance of Him, who is the happiest being in the universe, because he is the wisest, and the best.

FOR this reason, the whole of our existence, as well in the *future*, as in the *pre-*

SERMON. *sent* life, will be taken up in the same fear

II. of God, and keeping his commandments.

We find the employment even of the angels themselves, and the blessed spirits in heaven, described by the sacred writers as consisting in expressing the most awful fear and reverence of him; as "veiling their faces," "casting down their crowns," and "crying Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts, which art, and wast, and art to come;" and they are expressly said to "do his commandments." In the same manner, the happiness and reward of it to us, are represented to consist in "the spirits of just men being made perfect;" which can consist in nothing but the perfection I have been discoursing about, namely, of wisdom and moral rectitude; in the sense in which our Saviour exhorts us to "be perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Now this is an end worthy of all the attributes of God to propose in the formation of man. It is worthy of his holiness to make him happy through virtue, which

^a *Jf. vi. 2. Rev. iv. 10.*
xii. 23.

^a *Matt. v. 48.*

^b *Pf. ciii. 20.*

^c *Hab.*

we have seen is the resemblance and image S.E.M.
 of himself: And it is worthy of his good-
 ness to communicate to him the highest
 and most exalted kind of happiness; the
 same that he himself possesses: And holi-
 ness and goodness united, render it worthy
 of his wisdom under the grandest idea we
 can form of it.

2dly, This likewise is an end worthy of
 man to pursue, it being the only way to
 any rational happiness. It cannot be de-
 nied, but men have a right to pursue plea-
 sure; And whoever in their calm, deliberate
 hours, free from the hurry and flutter of
 wantonness and passion, can either find, or
 invent happiness and pleasure more true
 than that arising from *Solomon's* decision,
 I scruple not in God's name to bid them
 follow it. But let it be considered, that it
 is the business of rational creatures to
 "get wisdom, and with all their gettings
 "to get understanding." Now, the most
 experienced of all mankind have given their
 judgment, that "the fear of the Lord is
 "the beginning of wisdom," and a good
 "understanding have all they that do his

D 4

"com.

* *Prov. iv. 7.** *Ch. ix. 19.*

SERM. "commandments;" and at another time,
 II. that "happy is the man that findeth wisdom,
 "dom, and the man that getteth understanding."^b

AND the reason is the most obvious in the world; namely, because such happiness will last as long as the soul itself, and can never end in misery and torment; as every pleasure will, which is only attainable by debasing the noble powers and faculties of the mind, and which the lowest animals in the creation, who are incapable of any thing superior, enjoy with an equal relish: And therefore those who seek after nothing nobler, cannot be thought to have any advantage over such animals, however they may pride themselves in their own vanity: And to exalt themselves over the wise and virtuous part of mankind, on account of any worldly possessions, is as vain and absurd, as it would be to prefer an insect to a cherub.

AND yet, alas! how do men deceive themselves in this important respect! making it the whole business of their lives to search after pleasures that are beneath the dignity of their nature; and which, when found,

^a Psc. cxi. 10.

^b Prov. iii. 12.

found, cannot gratify them, but cheat their **SERM.** hopes, and are fairer in prospect than in **II.** enjoyment. What a hideous picture would it be, if one was to sit down and paint the vanity, foppery, and extravagance of a great part of mankind, with their shameful ignorance of, or at least inattention to, every principle that is great and noble! to say nothing of mad riot, and unnatural lust. *Solomon*, the author of my text, as I observed in the beginning of this discourse, had gone through all that variety of pleasure; but in the end we see, he found it was mere "vanity and vexation of spirit," and that "the conclusion of the whole matter, was to fear God and keep his commandments."

To what I have been saying under this head, I suppose some may object, that the business and occupations of men **HERE** are quite of a different nature; that it is the very appointment of Providence, that they should employ themselves in arts or professions, in order to get a provision for themselves and families; that it was the curse denounced immediately on the fall, that the whole posterity of *Adam* "should eat bread in the sweat of their faces;"

I

and

SERM. and that many of the employments men
 II. are necessarily, and unavoidably engaged in
 for this purpose, take up their whole
 thoughts, and allow little or no time for
 the things I have been speaking of.

I ANSWER, it must be owned, that this
 is out of all controversy, the appointment
 of Providence; and we find throughout the
 scripture, that an idle, lazy, inactive life
 is criminal; and offensive in the sight of
 God; inasmuch, that it is a law of christi-
 anity, "if any will not work, neither let
 "him eat;" and particular injunctions
 are given us, "not to be slothful in busi-
 "ness;" and that, coupled with no less
 a duty than being "fervent in spirit, serv-
 "ing the Lord." But this rather gives
 strength to, than weakens the argument I
 am upon.

FOR in serious truth, the employments
 of men, from the King upon the throne,
 to the hewer of wood, and the drawer of
 water, are nothing else, but one connected
 intercourse of good offices, and communi-
 cation to each others necessities. And
 though, for the utility of the body politic,
 we affix greater, or less ensigns of honour to

different ranks and stations of life, yet in **SERMON**
fact there is no one employment whatsoever, of the least service to the community, in itself the least dishonourable : In- **II.**
somuch that the higher part of mankind could not possibly subsist, without the services, kindness, and good offices of the lower, and are in truth, by far, the least able to shift for themselves of the two. It is the principles upon which men do these things, that render them mean and contemptible, and which prevent them from being virtuous.

It is true, that the generality of mankind look no farther as to these things, than their own interest and gain ; and this creates so many contests, and dirty squabbles about offices and employments, endeavouring each to undermine his neighbour, to engross business as much as they can, and amass riches to themselves, to be spent in riot and profusion. But if, instead of this sordid principle, they would consider their employments, rather as a communication, in their sphere, to the general good, as throwing in their proportion to the grand fund of happiness ; and this in conformity to the will of God in the present constitution

SERMON. tion of things, it would convert the lowest action of life into virtue and religion.

THIS is the reason of the precept we find in revelation, "Look not every one on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." And is likewise the reason why the apostle directs us, that "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of God." Now, the glory of God consists in the manifestation of his wisdom, power, and goodness in this whole system of things, whether natural or moral, and the subserviency of each part to the whole. This it is certainly in our power to promote; by contributing all we can, not to interrupt, but in the most perfect manner to fall in with his schemes and designs: The principal of all which, is, that we should resemble him in goodness and mercy, and do all we can to promote the rational happiness, and relieve the necessities of all the creatures he has made.

If every part of mankind, would carry this principle according as they are stationed, into the cabinet, or the field, into their studies, or their shops; if even the hewers,

* Phil. ii. 4.

b 1 Cor. x. 31.

MAN'S CREATION.

43

SERM. II.

hewers of wood, and drawers of water, and people on the same level, would act upon it, they would see a real dignity in their characters; and that they were all equally promoting the glory of God, and acting worthy of the rational nature he has given them; and that the lowest employment here, had its necessary, and real connection with the most exalted happiness of the next life.

I SHALL conclude the whole with observing, that what I have been advancing, is not only the dictate of reason and common sense, but is strictly conformable to all the revelations given by God to mankind; as will appear to every one who diligently and impartially studies the holy scriptures.

THE reason given for *Noah's* finding favour with God, and being chosen to survive the flood is, that "he was a just man"—The covenant made with *Abraham*, and confirmed to his posterity, was founded on the same principle—The law of *Moses* itself, as well as all the prophets, hang on these two commandments, the love

^a Gen. vi. 9.

^b Gen. xviii. 18, 19.

SERM. love of God, and of our neighbour.

II. And the prophets ask in so many words,

“What doth the Lord require of thee, but
“to do justly, and to love mercy, and to
“walk humbly with God?”^a importing
that he requires nothing else; and declare
positively that “he will have mercy and
“not sacrifice.”^c

NAY, after *the law and the prophets*, when
John the Baptist was sent “as a messenger
“to prepare the way before our Lord, and
“to proclaim, the kingdom of heaven is at
“hand,”^d his doctrine was “the necessity
“of bringing forth fruits meet for repen-
“tance.” And what those fruits were,
will appear from his answer to the people,
“He that hath two coats, let him impart
“to him that hath none; and he that
“hath meat, let him do likewise.”^e
And from what he said to the publicans,
“Exact no more than that which is ap-
“pointed you.”^f And moreover to the
soldiers, “Do violence to no man, neither
“accuse any falsely, and be content with
“your wages.”^g

MOR-

^a Matt. xxii. 37—40.

^b Mic. vi. 8.

^c Hof. vi. 6.

Matt. xii. 7.

^d Matt. iii. 2.

^e Ib. 8.

^f Luke

iii. 11.

^g Ib. 13.

^h Ib. 14.

MAN'S CREATION. V.

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MOREOVER, and indeed principally, he **Served.**
 that was mightier than *Job*, "the latchet
 " of whose shoes he was not worthy to **II**
 " unloose", gives us this short epitome of
 his whole precepts, "to be perfect, as
 " our Father which is in heaven is per-
 " fect.^b" And his apostles after him tell
 us, "the grace of God is designed to teach
 " men to live soberly, and righteously, and
 " godly.^c" Such is the connection of the
 wise and gracious plan which God Almighty
 has formed for our moral happiness.
 The *means*, by the several revelations he
 has given us, indeed, are various, but the
end is the same.

IN vain then, will "the ministers, and
 " stewards of" true religion, attempt "to
 " prepare and make ready the way of our
 " Lord" by any other methods, but
 " by turning the hearts of the disobedient
 " to the wisdom of the just;" nor "at
 " his second coming, to judge the world,"
 will any other preparation render us "an
 " acceptable people in his sight.^d" All
 the revelations that come from God have
 this tendency; and we shall but deceive
 our-

^a *Luke* iii. 16.

^b *Matt.* v. 48.

^c *Tit.* ii. 12.

^d The collect for the third Sunday in Advent.

SERM. ourselves; if we think that we read any
 II. thing else in the room of it therein. The
 one simple view is to raise us to the perfec-
 tion of moral virtue: And both "the be-
 ginning, and the conclusion of the whole
 matter, is, to fear God, and keep his com-
 mandments," which is the whole that
 he does, it is the whole that he can, require
 of man.

SERMON III.

On the necessity of practising universal virtue.

JAMES ii. 11.

For he that said, do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

THIS is the reason St. James gives SERM. III. for a position he had just before laid down, that "who keepeth the whole law, and yet offendeth in one point, he is guilty of all." A passage from whence many weak professors of christianity have drawn the most uncomfortable conclusions to themselves; as if not only every *deliberate*, but every *casual* fault, would involve them in the most *fatal* guilt; and have thereby been led into the most dreadful horrors of despair.

E

BUT

S. R. 18. BUT that this cannot be supposed to be

III. the sense of St. James, appears not only from the whole tenor of the doctrine of

mercy and forgiveness, annexed to repentance in the gospel; but likewise from cer-

tain passages in this very epistle, as well as divers others in holy scripture.—“In many

“things,” says he himself in the chapter following, “we offend all.” Now what

possible reason can be assigned, why we should be allowed opportunity of offending

in many things, if offending in one alone should subject us to damnation? For then

our state of trial would be at once determined; and who indeed could be saved?

Especially if we take in that other expression, that we offend ALL; and then surely

all must be damned. But can it be supposed that the preachers “of good tidings”

can advance so absurd a proposition? Or can the most desponding professors of

christianity imagine, that God has made men thus in vain; or entertain a notion so

dishonourable to him, and so destructive of the mercy and goodness of his nature?

It is therefore both a principle of common sense, and very evident from the ex-

planation

practising universal virtue.

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planation given in the text; that the intent of this and such like passages is only to enforce the practice of *universal* virtue, and correct every vicious and untoward habit; because he that said, do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill, &c. And accordingly the intention of this discourse will be to show,

III.

That in order to obtain the approbation of God, and our acceptance with him, it will not be enough that we excel in the practice of *some* virtues; nay that, as the apostle says, we "keep the whole law," and habitually offend "in one point only;" but that we must conform to it *universally* in every branch; being, as St. Paul says, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." For tho' God Almighty does mercifully allow of repentance after the commission of sin; there is not by the laws of the gospel, the least indulgence given to any *deliberate* violation of the laws of virtue. I shall therefore,

I. MAKE some observations on the ways by which men are apt to deceive themselves in this respect, and satisfy their

E 2 own



On the necessity of

own minds with a partial regard to the duties of virtue. And.

II. Offer some reasons for this universal practice of it; and particularly explain that which the apostle has proposed to our consideration in the text.

I. I SHALL make some observations on the ways by which men are apt to deceive themselves, and satisfy their own minds with a partial regard to the duties of virtue.

Now forasmuch as I have chosn to make use of this word *Virtue*, which is very much misunderstood by some, and misrepresented by others, I think proper to premise, in order to prevent any one from imagining it to be a low, carnal thing, compared with what they are apt to fancy more spiritual and sublime, that I mean by it, a conformity to that which is the rule of action of all rational beings—*Equality*—and truth; or in other words “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever

things I have chosen to make use of this word *equality*, rather than *equity*, not only as it is the original from whence the word *equity* is derived, but likewise because it is in scripture mentioned as the characteristic of the moral conduct of God himself, “Yet ye say, the way of the Lord is not equal: Hear now O house of *Israel*: Is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal?” *Ezek. xviii. 25.*

practising universal virtue.

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“ things are just ; whatsoever things are
 “ pure ; whatsoever things are lovely ;
 “ whatsoever things are of good report ; ”
 and all these in their largest extent. And
 I hope there are none so shamefully aban-
 doned to all good principle, as to call such
 things by any opprobrious names whatso-
 ever.

Now, as virtue in this sense will appear
 to be the ultimate perfection of our nature ;
 a deficiency in any of the duties of it will
 render our minds as deformed, and incom-
 plete, as our bodies would be without some
 of its principal members : Which, however
 honourable it may be to lose them upon
 certain occasions ; it was never thought a
 beauty to be born without ; and is seen
 with great distaste, when lost by vice, or
 rashness. Nay, very remarkable deficien-
 cies in this regard have always been thought
 monstrous, and the sight of such objects
 gives us uneasiness and loathing.

It is the same in the moral world,
 when we contemplate the characters of
 other beings around us. We do not see a
 man defective in the government of his
 appetites and passions, or in dispositions of

E 3

SERMON. benevolence, and generosity, and candour,

III.

with the same pleasure as we see one remarkable, and celebrated for them. And

this is so notorious, that some very excellent writers have laid the foundation of virtue in nothing else but this *natural perception* of its beauty, which they call *moral sense*, or *taste*. A constitution, which God himself has given us; and as all his works are founded in the exactest reason and proportion, does itself alone show the necessity of practising universal virtue, if we had no other arguments for it. And indeed, whether the foundation of virtue be laid in this *moral sense*; or in *truth*; or in the *fitness of things*; or in the sovereign *command* of Almighty God; the universal practice of it will be alike necessary on every hypothesis, and on every scheme. And the different reading of the margin from the text, as you have it translated, "that *law* which *he* said," or "*be* that said," will make no difference.

BUT if this *moral sense*, or *taste*, were indeed the foundation of virtue, as some will have it, it must lead us to perceive the excellency of all the branches of it whatsoever, and must be the same in all the rational

practising universal virtue.

nal creatures of God.—It is not my present business to enter into disputes of this nature. My only intention is to observe, that *all* the lights in which virtue can be considered, will show the necessity of practising *the whole*, as well as any particular part of it. Thus again, if it be laid in truth, or fitness; they will be all *equally* true, and in their several degrees, and on their several occasions, *equally* fit: I say, on their several occasions; for as the scripture represents *sin*, as more or less heinous, according to the circumstances that attend them, (for example, our Saviour tells *Pilate* n^o 1st he that delivered me unto thee hath the “greater sin”) so, there are some *virtues*, that are more useful to society than others, and shine with a greater lustre; and yet the less exalted, and the least useful, must be practised in their place; or else the character will be deficient. As in our external garb, to be covered up from the cold, and not to offend against modesty, may answer all the purposes of dress; yet it would be thought an offence against the received rules of decency and propriety, to go into publick assemblies, and appear be-

E 4

SERM. fore persons of superior rank, in habits that we need not be ashamed of in private and alone.—Allusions, frequent in the sacred books, where good men are said to “*cloath themselves with righteousness;*” “*wash their hands in innocency;*” and the instructions of virtue and religion are represented, as “*ornaments of grace unto the head, and chains about the neck;*” Allusions, which perhaps are better suited to convey ideas even to the wise themselves, than more abstracted, and unanimated reasoning.

It is the same with regard to virtue. Men that live alone, and have no connection with society, need no other virtues than industry, temperance, and devotion. But a man in society, standing in innumerable relations to other beings around him, will never be looked on as having a good character, unless he be compassionate, hospitable, candid, and bountiful; as well as industrious, temperate, and devout.

And yet, how partial do we see men in these respects? Many think a mercantile exactness in matters of *meum* and *tuum*, to be the whole of virtue, and if they pay

every

practising universal virtue.

every body their own, they presume, they have washed their hands in innocency, and may "compass the altar of God" without the least apprehensions. But he that said, "owe no man any thing" added also, "but to love another." He that taught us "to render to all their due," hath taught us also to "lend, hoping for nothing again, and from him that would borrow of us, not to turn away." It is true, "he that doth righteousness, is righteous, even as God is righteous;" but the righteousness of God consists, not only in justice, but in mercy, patience, forgiveness, and the like: Nay, men may be really conscientious in the practice of all the external duties of devotion, and yet for want of this *universal* virtue, be unjustified in the sight of God.

Our Saviour spake a parable to his disciples, on purpose to convince them of the truth of this; namely, that of "two men who went up into the temple to pray, the one a pharisee, the other a publican." The pharisee appealed unto him that searcheth the hearts, and tryeth the reins

^a Rom. xiii. 8. ^b Matt. xxiii. 23. ^c Luke vi. 35.
^d John iii. 7. ^e Luke xviii. 10, & seq.

SER. M. sins of the children of men, that he "fast-

III "ed twice in the week, and gave tithes of

"all that he possessed;" and our Saviour

insinuates nothing at all to the contrary.

The publican, conscious of a vicious life,

and unable to make any such appeal, could

only "smite upon his breast, and say,

"God be merciful to me a sinner:" And

yet our Saviour tells his disciples, that the

latter went down to his house justified

"rather than the other." His contrite

disposition at that time, was more accept-

able than the spiritual pride and arrogance

which eclipsed the fasting, and tithes, and

almsgiving of the Pharisee. At another

time, our Saviour asks his disciples, what

they did "more than others, when they

"loved those only that loved them, for

even the Publicans, persons the Jews held

in great contempt, "did the same?"

And this is the principal means by which

men deceive themselves in this matter. The

prudent *miser* thanks his God, that he is

no *prodigal*, and wonders how any one can

squander away the good things of pro-

vidence. The benevolent *prodigal* stands

amazed how any can fordidly heap up

blow and as grievous as death to his

30. *Luke xviii. 14.* *Matt. v. 46.*

riches, that will perish with them. Each **SECT. II.**
of these is extremely right in his opinion of **III.**
the other; but entirely forgives to form a
just judgment of himself. And even, al-
lowing them all the advantage they can
take from a comparison between themselves,
their virtues are at best but partial; the
truth being, that prudence, and benevolence,
should have their due proportion; and nei-
ther, without the other, may truly be called
good; but receives its lustre only by
the contrast.—We shall perceive the force
of the observation, by considering a cha-
racter of two of this sort in its true light.

Let us suppose then, a man of refined
sense and understanding; perfectly skilled
in all the principles of natural, civil, and
political justice; and acting on those
principles in the most scrupulous man-
ner, paying even to the uttermost far-
thing;—for temperance likewise the most
abstemious; that would not defile his neigh-
bour's bed, however powerful the tempta-
tion, or secret the opportunity; and equally
averse to every other impurity, as to adul-
tery;—suppose him a magistrate too, that
would punish the violation of all the laws
of society in others, as severely as he would
judge of, and abstain from them himself;—

add

SERM. add to all this, that he was devout beyond example, observed every rite of the religion of his country, and would suffer persecution, nay even martyrdom in defence of them. Who, that without knowing, or enquiring farther into his character, would not highly esteem and reverence the man? —But if we found this just man, this anchorite, as rigorous in his censures, as in his justice; putting the most unkind constructions on the actions of others that they will bear; and of a nature inexorable and unforgiving;—if we found, that though he would *pay* to a farthing, he would not give so much as a mite; of unsufferable pride towards his inferiors in outward circumstances; computing himself and others by their worldly possessions, to which he is attached that he thinks it the most impudent thing in the world, to administer to the necessities of a fellow-creature; incapable of shedding a tear at his misfortunes; leaving him to struggle with them, and to get out of them as he can; resigning him wholly to the providence of Him that made him; to be better and more beneficent than whom were the vainest and most presumptuous thing that could be.

practising universal virtue.

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—What would any man of the least *SERMON*
tenderness and compassion, think of such a
character!



LET us suppose again, another person
possessed of many of the *contrary* virtues,
most tenderly sympathizing with every ob-
ject in distress, with a hand perpetually
extended, and a purse open to relieve them;
that even prevented their very wishes, not
waiting to be solicited, but flying to their
relief; being indeed, as the apostle phrases
it, "ready to give, and glad to distribute,"
and this in the most unbounded manner,
to friends and foes, to relations, country-
men, and the most distant foreigners; to
the whole family of God, however circum-
stanced, or however defective; and all in
the politest manner, doubling the favour
by the address and gracefulness of doing it;
To which we will add, that he had a
mind free from any of the rough and tur-
bulent passions, but was of the most gen-
tle, forgiving nature;—Would it not grieve
one to the soul to find, so amiable a crea-
ture had any "spot, or wrinkle, or any
such thing?"—But let us suppose him,

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 17. See the translation in our communion-
office.

SECT. II. at the same time, a slave to other passions

III.

of equally mischievous effects; mistaking them for social, kind, and benevolent affections; bringing ruin and infamy on the very object of his pretended love; smiling at the distress of the parents, whose daughter he has despoiled of her honour; wondering they cannot be appeased by the purse he offers them, and the care he promises to take of her; multiplying their sorrows, and even at last bringing down the grey hairs to the grave;—suppose him gratifying all the vanity and extravagance of the object of his passion, with the utmost profusion, and stifling all the remorse of her conscience; foolishly pretending that there was no harm in all this.—Who that has any notions of purity, chastity, conjugal affection, and the least regard to the law of christianity, and of his country, would condemn him; at the same time that he might pity him, weep for him, and pray for him!

IN both these characters (and they are drawn from real life) we see very great and good qualities; but at the same time very great and mischievous vices. And it is no excuse to say, that *the one* paid the most

sacred

practising universal virtue.

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sacred regard to nice and punctilious just
 vice; and the other had noble and extensive
 benevolence; and therefore the righteousness
 of the first, and the charity of the last,
 will cover a multitude of sins: "Because
 every man of consistent virtue, must detest
 the faults of each, when taken separately
 and alone: And as the virtues of each, are
 nevertheless virtues, because mixed with
 vices; so, neither are their vices at all the
 less so, because mixed with virtues."

It will be the same with characters that
 have smaller proportions of either. Defects
 there may be; and in this imperfect state,
 for our mortification there will probably al-
 ways be. But want of virtue there should
 be none: That is, we should always prac-
 tise the duties enjoined, as well as forbear
 the sins forbidden by christianity. And yet
 it is truly the state of the world; there are
 much fewer persons in it, notoriously bad,
 than conspicuously and truly good. There
 are multitudes that would not oppress, nor
 rob, nor deceive; but there are few, ex-
 tremely few, that (except in their own fa-
 milies, and where it would be too shame-
 ful not to do it) give in any due propor-
 tion,

Sermon, "meat to the hungry, and drink

III. "the thirsty, who take in the stranger

"and cloath the naked, who visit the sick

"and come to the relief of the prisoners.

—And yet, is there any christian who can

read, ignorant, that these duties will be

required of us at the day of judgment.

Or who can help observing, that our

aviour in his representation of that day, has

put no murderer, nor adulterer, nor fornicator,

nor thief, nor liar, among the goats on his

left-hand, (it being evident to common reason

and sense, that they can have no other

place) but has taken particular care to

deceive men on the subject we are discus-

sing of, by particularly pointing out to us

that *those* likewise shall be associated with

them on the left-hand, who have neglected

the duties of charity, and kindness that

have been mentioned.—Good God! what

a sad reverse have we made in the christian

system!

II. I HAVE in a great measure prevented

myself in what I proposed, in the second

place, namely, to offer some *reasons* for

this practice of universal virtue; as you

must,

practising universal virtue.

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must, from what has been already said, SERM.

be well convinced of the necessity of it. III.

However, you will be abundantly confirmed in it by the following arguments.

And,

1st, ONE is taken from the nature of our *present state* and condition; namely, that of *trial*, and discipline, and *progress to perfection*. Which is the reason of those passages in the *New Testament*, that we should be perfect and intire "wanting nothing;" that we should abstain from "all appearance of evil," not having "spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing." Now though this state of trial necessarily implies in some periods of it, ignorance, weakness, and imperfection; yet it likewise implies, learning, improvement, facility, experience, and accomplishment: Like an apprenticeship, or a course of studies, in which we are every day to become more and more expert, and masters in our business. Which gave occasion to a very wise and obvious question which our Saviour asked *Nicodemus*, "Art thou a *master* in *Israel*, and knowest not these *things*?" In the same manner, we should

^a James i. 4.
^a John iii. 10.

^b 1 Thes. v. 22.

^c Eph. v. 27.

SERMON. should consider the situations, characters, and relations that we bear in life, and be careful to practise the virtues, that are annexed to them. For as it would be a shame for a *man*, to be without the knowledge and sense of a *child*, so will it be for a creature that has had a considerable time of trial and discipline, to have made no more improvement in *virtue* than a child.

IN this comparison, I mean by *virtue*, something more than innocence, namely, strength, patience, fortitude, abstinence, universal benevolence; not a dead, lifeless, inactive benevolence, like the "Be thou warmed; and filled," St. *James* speaks of *, but exerted in the most active, universal beneficence.

2dly, ANOTHER argument arises from hence, that the essence of *virtue* consists, when rightly explained, in imitating the perfections of God. Now supposing, on one hand, we were to consider *him* as merely a just, rigorous, exacting being; or on the other hand, as a being of meer soft, effeminate, indulgent compassion, equally dispensed to the guilty, and to the innocent and virtuous; how much less *amiable* in the one case, and *reverend* in the other, would

* *James* ii. 16.

practising universal virtue.

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would our ideas of him be? It is the same with all rational beings. The end

of religion is perfection; and perfection that consists in being "perfect, as our father which is in heaven is perfect."

For which reason the christian revelation makes all moral virtue consist in acting towards one another as brethren, and children of the same father, insomuch that the whole of social virtue is comprehended in that one idea of "brotherly love;" and when our Saviour enjoins us to love and forgive our enemies, the reason is still the same; "that we may be the children of our father which is in heaven." But we can have no possible claim to this relation, if we habitually neglect the practice of the same virtues, that constitute, what is generally called, his moral character.

3dly, THERE is such a connection between the duties which compose the christian life, that a defect in any one instance will naturally and necessarily create defects in others, not only in ourselves, but in those about us. If we do not proper acts of justice, kindness, and charity to our neighbours; they may be absolutely destitute of all

F 2

* Matt. v. 48.

* Matt. y. 45.

SERMON. all relief, and consequently be forced to do

III.  injustice to those also with whom they are concerned, and either become vagabonds, or thieves. If parents will not do their duty by their children, it is much more likely that they may enter into a vicious, than a virtuous course of life. And it is fact with respect to the world, that many things which we are apt severely to impute as vices to others, are the natural, and almost unavoidable consequence of the ill treatment they have met with. I might exemplify this in many other cases; but it shall suffice to observe how nice and exact it should render us in all our behaviour.

4thly, THE neglect of any one duty of virtue is *a violation of the law*, and an opposition to the authority of God; of which if we had a due sense, we should be led to the universal obedience I have been discouraging of. An argument which the apostle has put in the strongest manner possible in the text, "For he that said, do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law;" the reason for obeying the commands of God

practising universal virtue.

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in any one case, being equally conclusive SERM.
for obedience in all the rest, since they are III
equally the dictates of infinite wisdom and
goodness: And disobedience to them, is
calling in question, and absolutely denying,
either one, or both, setting up our own
judgment in opposition to his; and refusing
subjection to his divine government. Which
evidently shows that our obedience in other
respects, does not arise from regard to his
authority (for then we should obey in all
respects) but from wantonness, irregular
inclination, passion, or private interest:
And therefore such practices, instead of
atoning for other defects, will in fact be
an aggravation of them.

LET us therefore in all our actions, en-
deavour to keep up in our minds a constant
and lively sense of his authority, and of his
all-seeing eye which is a witness to our
most secret actions when we oppose it, and
penetrates through the thickest darkness.

And, as we have seen how men are apt to
deceive themselves in this respect, let us be
upon our guard against every thing that
may draw off our attention to any of the

F 3

least

SERM. least of the duties enjoined us by our holy
 III. religion.

THERE is one method of doing this which is dictated by experience; but at first sight may appear extremely strange, and for which I must therefore bespeak your candor, till you hear the reason I shall give for it; and that is, not to *over-rate*, or set *too high* a value on any one virtue whatsoever *. For it is by this means that we come to *under-rate*, or set *too small* a value on the rest. No man could so far deceive himself, as to be a *miser* upon principle, if he did not set so great a value on frugality and prudence, as to lead him to despise the principles of generosity and liberality. Nor could any one be a *Prodigal* upon principle, if he did not set so high an esteem on generosity and liberality, as to contemn the virtues of frugality and prudence. A prejudice, often taken from the great and odious attachment we see to these things in other persons, which gives a distaste and dislike to such characters. But

* In this sense the following lines of Horace may be applied.

*Nil admirari, prope res est una, Numici,
 Solaque quæ possit facere & servare beatum.*

Hor. Epist. sext.

practising universal virtue.

71

Let us remember from the example of the **SERM.**
pharisee, that it is not enough, that "we **III.**
are not as other men are:" Our business is to be, what *all men should be*. And
at the day of judgment, we shall have no
works of super-erogation to produce; our
virtues will receive no lustre from compa-
rison, or contrast: But the single question
will be, whether we have made it our study
and business, as the apostle enjoins us, to
be "perfect and intire, wanting nothing."
Without which we shall appear naked in
the eye of the judge; and for want of a
wedding-garment be thrust into outward
darkness.

* Luke xviii. 11.

F 4

SER-

SERMON IV.

The excellency of the Christian
morals.

PHIL. iv. 8.

*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true,
whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever
things are just, whatsoever things are pure,
whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever
things are of good report; if there be any
virtue; and if there be any praise, think
on those things.*

SERM.
IV.

THOUGH it has been observed
of the Christian religion, that it
gives us no regular system of mo-
rals, yet whoever has considered it with
any care, must certainly see that the pre-
cepts it does give us, are of the noblest and
most perfect kind, commanding us to "ab-
stain from all appearance of evil;" and

not only to *embrace*, but to “adorn the SERMON.
doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” IV.

May, so extremely nice and delicate are the writers of the *New Testament* in this regard, that if they do not enumerate every duty of virtue; which, considering the various circumstances men may be thrown into, might perhaps be impossible to do; they generally express their exhortations in such a large manner, as will take in whatever can be imagined by the finest and most exalted genius.

WHAT, for example, can any one possibly add to that summary of practical religion, which our Saviour has given us in his excellent sermon on the mount, “to be perfect, even as our father which is in heaven is perfect?” Or what precept can be more large and comprehensive than that of the apostle in my text? By which every man is guarded against any possible mistake, such as he might have made, had the apostle descended to more particulars; which might have led him to think there was nothing more than those particulars required: But, “things that” are

^a *Tit. ii. 10.*

^b *Matt. v. 48.*

SER.M. "are lovely, and of good report," and to

IV. which wise and worthy men have annexed
 "praise," include every thing that is great
 and noble, every private, every social,
 every patriot virtue.

IN this light then christianity will be
 found to comprehend all the moral precepts
 written in our hearts, or taught by the re-
 velation of *Moses*, or the Prophets. Which
 is the reason why, as has been observed, it
 gives us no *regular* system of morals; there
 being supposed to be previously understood
 by other lights. And therefore we find
 our Saviour spends a great part of his dis-
 courses, rather in explaining and improving
 upon the letter of the law, than in repeat-
 ing what they were supposed to understand
 before. And the apostles after him con-
 fine the particulars they mention chiefly
 to the notorious mistakes that generally
 prevailed; for example, such as the abso-
 lute right of parents over their children,
 husbands over their wives, or women to
 throw off their subjection; or where men,
 through spiritual pride and vain-glory, or
 imagined privileges given them, had mis-
 took the relations they bore, and the duties
 required of them: Otherwise, as I have

said,

the Christian morals.

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said, they choose to express themselves for SEVERAL
the most part in general terms.

IV.

My design in discoursing on the words
I have read to you, which are of this sort,
is, from the several expressions therein to
show the great excellency of the christian
morals, in,

- I. Rectifying the mistakes men had
fallen into about morality.
- II. In the delicacy of the precepts con-
tained therein. And,
- III. In the influence they are designed
to have on the internal disposition, as
well as the outward practice, com-
prized in the expression, here tran-
slated THINK of those things; the
full meaning of which I shall explain.

" FINALLY, brethren, whatsoever things
" are true, whatsoever things are honest,
" whatsoever things are just, whatsoever
" things are pure, whatsoever things are
" lovely, whatsoever things are of good
" report; if there be any virtue, and if
" there be any praise, think on those things."

I.

I. RECTIFYING the mistakes men had fallen into about morality. The first expression in the text is, whatsoever things are TRUE, in opposition to the false notions that had been entertained, and precepts that had been inculcated. The history of the *Jews* will show us how a selfish disposition, or a propensity to vice, had made men wrest the letter of the law to their own purposes; or confine the meaning of it within very narrow bounds; or reason falsely concerning the relations they stood in, without a proper consideration of the universal relation of the whole body of mankind.

The Scribes and Pharisees were men of this sort, who "made the commandment of God," as our Saviour says, "of none effect by their tradition." For they had taught the people, "not to eat except they washed their hands often." "And many other things there were which they had received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and tables."—At the first appearance, one would have thought that such

^a Mark vii. 13.

^b Ib. ver. 4.

customs were not only very harmless and S.E.M.
innocent in themselves, but highly decent, IV.

and the properest expressions and emblems of purity. But our Saviour taught his disciples to abstain from such external performances, for a very wise reason which he gives for it, *viz.* because men are apt to rest in them, substituting them in the room of inward virtue, cleanliness, and abhorrence of vice. "There is nothing from without a man," says he, "that entering into him can defile him, because it entereth not into his heart." But "that which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within, and defile the man." And therefore the business of true morality and religion was, to "wash their hands in innocency," and to cleanse themselves from such-like defilements.

AND how apt the observance of those traditions was, not only to consume the time

SERMON. time they should spend in real acts of virtue

IV. and piety; but to lead them into hypocrisy,

"honouring God with their lips,

"when their hearts are far from him,

"rejecting his commandment that they may

"keep their own traditions;" he instances

at the same time, and in the same dis-

course, "*Moses* said, honour thy father

"and thy mother, and whoso curseth

"ther or mother, let him die the death.

"But ye say, if a man shall say to his

"father or mother, it is CORBAN, that is,

"to say a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest

"be profited by me, he shall be free from

"And ye suffer him no more to do ought

"for his father or his mother; making

"the word of God of none effect through

"your traditions which ye have received

"and many such like things ye do."

What can be a stronger instance of the

blindness, weakness, and false reasoning

of superstition, than to teach that a man

should take what he is obliged by all the

ties of nature and gratitude, to apply to

the relief and support of his aged, helpless,

and decrepid parents (and being aged, help-

less, and decrepid alone, are forcible rea-

sons

sons in common pity and compassion to SERM.
 relieve any fellow-creature, though under IV.
 no immediate, much less so sacred a rela-
 tion as that of a parent) and offer it rather
 as a gift to God, "who needeth nothing,
 seeing he giveth to all, life, and breath,
 and all things!"

AND not only in such gross impositions
 and abuses, but in things that are RIGHT
 in themselves, the christian morals show us,
 where men are apt to stop short, and con-
 fine them within too narrow bounds, dis-
 covering to us the WHOLE TRUTH in its
 fullest extent. Thus with regard to mur-
 der, adultery, perjury, revenge, and ha-
 tred; where "those of old time" had
 confined them to *overt-acts*, if I may so
 call them, and as our law expresses it, our
 Saviour has taught us, that for the same rea-
 sons that these are forbidden, anger, peevish-
 ness, an unforgiving temper, lust, unrea-
 sonable divorce, profane swearing, and ha-
 tred even of an enemy, are likewise for-
 bidden; and modesty, purity, patience,
 meekness, and universal benevolence re-
 quired^b.

^a *Acts* xvii. 25.
 mount, *Matt.* v, &c.

^b See the whole sermon on the

SERM.
IV.

I SHALL mention but one instance more of this kind, and that because of the warmth, earnestness, and indignation he expresses at their false reasoning concerning it. It is the fallacy of what they taught concerning *oaths*; when they said, "Who-
 "soever shall swear by the temple, it is no-
 "thing: But whosoever shall swear by the
 "gold of the temple, he is a debtor. And
 "whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is
 "nothing: But whosoever sweareth by the
 "gift that is upon it, he is guilty." To
 which our Saviour gives this obvious and
 earnest reply, "Ye fools and blind, for
 "whether is greater, the gold, or the tem-
 "ple that sanctifieth the gold? The gift
 "or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Who-
 "therefore shall swear by the altar, swear-
 "eth by it, and by all things thereon.
 "And whoso shall swear by the temple,
 "sweareth by it, and by Him that dwel-
 "leth therein. And he that sweareth by
 "heaven, sweareth by the throne of God,
 "and by Him that sitteth thereon." Well then might such falshood, and preva-
 rication, induce our Saviour to pronounce
 upon the Scribes and Pharisees, who made

use of it, and thereby misled and deluded SERM.
 the unthinking people, such dreadful woes; IV.
 calling them, "hypocrites, fools, and blind
 guides, which strain at a gnat, and swal-
 low a camel;" and to liken them
 unto whited sepulchres, which indeed
 appear beautiful outward, but are within
 full of dead mens bones, and of all un-
 cleanness."

FROM all this we see the exact *truth*, and
 excellent *sense* the christian morals are found-
 ed in; discountenancing all superstitious
 mistakes about religion, furnishing us with
 proper principles to reason rightly about
 them, and to find out, as the text expresses
 it, "whatsoever things are true." Direct-
 ing us moreover to carry them to their ut-
 most latitude; not like children and ser-
 vants, satisfying and defending ourselves
 when we have obeyed the mere letter of a
 command; but considering the real pur-
 port, extent, and importance of every pre-
 cept that is given us.

II. HOWEVER, that this may not be
 thought too dry and heavy a subject;
 tho', in fact, nothing can be more fair and
 beautiful: I proceed, *secondly*, to show the

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great

^a Matt. xxiii. 24.

^b Ib. ver. 27.

SERM. great delicacy of the christian precept

IV. Truth will always be excellent and loved in the eyes of every impartial enquirer after it: But it may be represented to others with greater or less ornament, dressed with more or less elegance and neatness. Is this then the christian morals have a peculiar excellence, as will appear from the remaining expressions of the text, " whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

1st, WITH regard to the first of these, the word HONEST in the *English* language has by frequent use, and application to trivial matters, degenerated into a much lower meaning than the *Latin* from whence it is derived, or the original used in the text. A man that gives to, and requires of others, only an exact equivalent, according to the common and ordinary valuation of the things in which he has any dealings with them, is ordinarily reputed honest. But the *Greek* word here used, imports

the christian morals.

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imports that nobleness and gravity of behaviour, by which the truly great and honourable are distinguished from the vulgar, and from persons of light and vain minds, and whereby they deserve, and attract their *reuerence*. And were all men in very deed to practise the morals of christianity, there could be none but men of honour in the world, nor any other distinctions among them, but the ranks and stations necessary to the body politic.

2dly, But as this reuerence, by the frailty and imperfection of human nature, may be annexed to *false* honour; the apostle adds, *secondly*, whatsoever things are just; a general expression including the whole of moral rectitude; not conveying a limited idea, opposed to, or distinguished from mercy and clemency, as some are apt to apply it. For though there seems to be such a distinction in scripture, where the apostle tells us that "scarcely for a righteous, or a just man" will one die, yet "peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die;"^b this does not only regard the thing itself, but the conceptions men are apt to entertain of it; and is in-

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tended

^a *Ter duarum.*

^b *Rom. v. 7.*

SERM. tended to show us, that a man *righteously*

IV. *just* is not so amiable a character, as a man whose justice is tempered with mercy and kindness, nor will it ever insinuate itself so much into the esteem of mankind.—What supports and authorizes this explanation, and will make it appear plain and obvious to the meanest capacity, is the character given of *Joseph* in the gospel, when he found the mother of our Lord with child by the Holy Ghost. Before he knew the author of her pregnancy, the history tells us he had a mind to disannul his contract of marriage with her; but was unwilling to make her a publick example of the punishment usual in those cases, being too generous and good-natured to expose her, and therefore determined to put her away privately. In *strict justice*, had she really been defiled, he could not have been too severe with her: An injury in so tender a point raises a most quick, and bitter resentment. And therefore the Mosaic law directs that a pretended virgin, who comes so polluted to the marriage-bed, “should be stoned to death.” But when *Joseph’s* goodness had got the better of his an-

ger and resentment, the Evangelist makes use of the word before us, accounting for his merciful behaviour to her, from his being a just man^a; that is, not so directly just in this particular, as a man *universally* virtuous, and a strict observer of *whatever was right*. And it is an unnecessary contest among commentators^b, whether the word *δικαιος* is ever used in the *New Testament* for good and merciful, or no; it is sufficient that it is used by the best writers, particularly by *Aristotle* in his *Ethics*^c, for the whole of virtue, which includes every particular, and implies charity, kindness, generosity, and every act of humanity, as in the instance just mentioned.

3. HOWEVER, as these two last expressions, strong and significant as they are, more strictly relate to our conduct towards our neighbours; the apostle adds another, in the *third* place, which regards immediately, and only ourselves, "whatsoever things are PURE." It is not uncommon for people to think, and satisfy themselves

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with

^a *Matt.* i. 18.

^b See *Hammond* and *Whitby* on the place.

^c Ὅτι μὲν οὖν οἱ δίκαιοι πάντες, καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς διὰ τὴν πρὸς ὅλην ἀρετὴν, ὁλοκλήρως.

Arist. Eth. lib. 5. cap. 5.

SERM. with it, that they are no one's enemies but
 IV. their own, and give to every one else whatso-
 ever is honest and just. But there is in truth
 such a thing as *self-justice* likewise, repre-
 sented in scripture, not in the pitiful sense
 of covetousness, but under the names of
 purity, sobriety, abstinence, and the like.
 And here again the apostle has selected in
 the text the strongest word that could be
 found for it, which signifies not only chaste
 and modest, but *unspotted, free* from all
 manner of *defilement* or *pollution*, and per-
 fectly *clean from every stain* *. In which
 particular, the gospel takes the nicest care
 to direct us not only to outward purity of
 action, that we may not offend against the
 received laws of modesty, decency, and
 sobriety; but to implant holiness, another
 word used for the same thing in scripture,
 in the inward disposition of the mind, and
 give it so deep a root, that no temptation
 whatsoever shall induce us even to wish to
 violate it, even though we were sure of
 the most absolute secrecy; resisting and
 controuling those inclinations and desires
 that are but too natural to us, and which
 the vitious part of mankind are not only

apt

apt to indulge, but to reason in favour of, **S E R M.**
and to encourage each other in by lessons **IV.**
of sensuality and lewdness.

ONE would be apt to think, that what has been already said was sufficient to establish a very excellent system of morals; and that if men conformed to the laws of truth, honour, rectitude, and purity, nothing more need be required of them. And this is indeed exceedingly true; they will be sufficient to constitute a moral character. But the apostle is solicitous to give all these things the best appearance, ornament, and grace that he can; and it is with this view that the remaining expressions of the text are introduced.

4. AMONG many of the antient philosophers, there was great moroseness, sowness, and appearance of ill-nature. The *Cynics*, particularly, are so called from a *Greek* word that signifies, and would be most literally translated with us *dogged*. So likewise were the *Jews*, however proper their behaviour to each other, represented among all the heathens. Characters not much unlike that of *Nabal* in the *Old Testament*^a; or of many unhappy Christians,

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whom

^a 1 Sam. xxv.

SERM. whom we see every day among ourselves,

IV. that mistake the frank and generous disposition of the gospel, or labour under dis-tempered and melancholy habits of body, doing their best actions with as ill a grace as they can: By which means they often create in others an aversion to religion, instead of attracting their esteem and regard to it. Contrary to this, the apostle recommends to us, in the fourth place, to practise all the fore-mentioned duties in the most LOVELY manner, such as may draw the approbation of all mankind; the young as well as the old, the gay and lively, as well as the grave and serious; the great and honourable, as well as those of lower rank and condition; On the same principle as he seems to have formed his own conduct, when, he tells us, he "became all things" to all men, that he might by all means "save some"; and St. *Peter*, when he recommends the customary behaviour of complaisance and good manners, in that particular precept "Be courteous."^b

5. STILL farther, to be as universal and extensive as may be, the text goes on to direct us, not to confine our conduct to what may be lovely in the eyes of those with

^a 1 Cor. ix. 22.

^b 1 Pet. iii. 8.

with whom we are more immediately con- S E R M.
cerned, but likewise, *fitly*, to take into it, IV.

whatever things have been *well-spoken of*,
and recorded to have been thought amiable
from the beginning of time. We are na-
turally charmed with a fine sentiment, or
any good character in antient writers; led
to interest ourselves in them, and feel a
particular pleasure in their success and hap-
piness, and the rewards bestowed on them.
Meekness, mildness, patience, submission
to the will of heaven, the exertion of all
the natural affections, have this effect
upon us. It is the same in stories that
arise in common conversation; in things
we see in the conduct of our neigh-
bours, and every one we have occa-
sion to observe upon. What then can
be more obvious and natural than that we
should introduce the same into our own
characters, imitate and emulate such laud-
able examples, and form ourselves upon
the models of those who have thus obtained
a GOOD REPORT?

6. BUT meekness, mildness, patience,
submission to the will of heaven, and exer-
tion of the natural affections are not all.
In the christian life there is much more
required,

SEEM. required, even, *firmly*, useful, active, ge-

IV. nerous VIRTUE ; the duties of it being admirably mixed and tempered together. Though it inculcates the softer virtues, it requires likewise spirit, boldness, courage, resisting and combating with all the tyrants and oppressors of mankind, and with every unjust attempt to enslave them ; the love of our country ; conduct and vigilance in kings, princes, commanders, and magistrates, and that nobleness of mind which would set them above the cowardice of doing wrong. For though in our language we have made virtue a general term, in the *Greek* and *Latin*, these things are the more precise and determinate ideas to the word. And those men are the most mistaken that can be, who represent christianity as a system of cowardice, pusillanimity, and meanness of spirit. For there never was any system of righteousness that could inspire with more real courage ; through which, upon a reasonable occasion, we always may, as the worthies of old did, " subdue kingdoms, stop the " mouths of lions, quench the violence " of fire, escape the edge of the sword, " out of weakness be made strong, wax

valiant in fight, and turn to flight the SERM.
armies of the aliens." IV.

7. IN short, to sum up the whole, in the
seventh place, whatever has been justly ce-
lebrated, and applauded, and received the
PRAISES of mankind; be it the mild af-
fections, or the social virtues; the calm
and gentle duties of retired life, or the
more active ones of the cabinet or the
field; be it the exactest retributions of jus-
tice, or the communications of diffusive,
unsparing generosity; every thing that has
given true fame and reputation to friends,
lawgivers, patriots, heroes, and every shin-
ing character; must enter, upon their
proper occasions, and in their fullest ex-
tent, into that of a christian. And herein
we are particularly led to the examples of
the patriarchs and prophets of old, and
the elders who have obtained a good re-
port:^b But still more immediately to
that of our blessed Lord and Master; to
the apostles he sent out to preach his gos-
pel; and to the saints and confessors who
have done honour to the christian name,
and gained the praise and glory belonging
to it.

^a Heb. xi. 33, 34.

^b Ib. ver. 39.

THUS

SERM. THUS excellent, thus noble, and exten-

IV. five are the morals of christianity. I shall

only repeat, to prevent misunderstanding and objections, what I have already said more than once, that these things are enjoined us *upon their proper occasions*. For there is no true religion that can be supposed to require us to go out of character. It is not expected of any private man, at every turn, to leave the business of his profession, and commence patriot or hero. It is sufficient that we do the offices we are called to; and that principles of truth, honour, justice, and virtue animate us all in our several stations and professions, be they high or low. I proceed to show the excellency of the christian morals, in the

THIRD place, from the influence they are designed to have on the internal disposition of the mind, as well as the outward practice, comprized in the expression here translated "*think*" on those things." Which implies,

1st, THAT they should be always uppermost on our minds, ready to be brought into practice; so that no temptation whatsoever lead us to prevaricate on these subjects,

ects, or to depart from them. That no superstitious or erroneous principles induce us to rest in external performances, such as "washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels and tables," substituting them in the room of honour, justice, purity and virtue: That no subserviency to the avaricious views and schemes of other men, lead us to devote to pretended pious uses what we owe to our nearest relations, friends, creditors, and to the needy. That no false notions of honour, wisdom, prudence, and the like, betray us into a neglect of those charitable and generous offices, which are due to the distressed and the miserable: But that we *habituate* ourselves to such principles, as, like the affections and passions, will *instantly arise* at the very sight of the objects they are concerned with. For that is the difference between the morals of christians, and the practice of other men; that where the latter act upon passion, prejudice, caprice, and sordid motives of interest; the true christian acts all upon principle, even in the lowest and most trivial matters. As the apostle exhorts, "whether he eats, or drinks, or

" what-

SERM. "whatever he does, he does all to the

IV. "glory of God."

2dly, THE word here translated "things," imports farther; that we be perpetually *reasoning* about them, *drawing right inferences* from these premises, bringing them every day nearer to perfection; and carrying them to their utmost latitude. And this is the reason why, as I observed in the beginning of this course, the writers of the Christian Morals do not descend more to *particulars*, but only give us *general precepts*, leaving it to our own thoughts to carry them to their proper extent; rendering our virtue the more generous, as it thereby arises in greater measure from our own free agency, and a right use of the faculties and abilities God has given us, consistently with our growth in grace, and the progress to perfection required of us. For it is in religion, as in an apprenticeship or a course of studies, where we are taught the general rules of business, or the first principles of arts and sciences; but it is by our own diligence and industry, by our own experience and observation, and by the intenseness with which we ap-

ply to them, that we become proficient, SERM.
and at length masters, and *finne* one above IV.
another.

We have already seen, that a great part of our Saviour's discourses were to discover the false reasoning, by which the Scribes and Pharisees drew the people into their own bad measures; and that it was not merely by his own authority, but by *right* reasoning and truth that he opposed them. Our duty is the same, and we can never err in favour of the things that have been mentioned; the only danger is, that we may, as the men of this world most assuredly do, fallaciously reason them away, confounding the precepts of the gospel, and attending only to those which fall in with a selfish contracted disposition: Pretending that they cannot answer it to their families, their circumstances, or their prudence to "be
"merciful, to give to every one that
"asketh," and from him that would borrow of them not to "turn away:"
Thus "making the word of God of none effect," through false reasonings they are accustomed to. For it is evident to every man who *thinks on* them impartially, that
the

SERMON. the duties they plead so much in favour of

IV. namely, discretion, prudence, and parsimony with regard to our own affairs, and required of us merely that we may not be indiscretion and prodigality; put it out of our power *to give and lend* to others; and that though we ought to provide "for our own, and especially for those of our own house," we ought not lavishly to throw away, or heap upon them, what might and ought to go to the support of numbers; but to consider ourselves and them likewise merely as a part; and a very small part too of the family of God, to which we stand in a general relation, and to which we owe the most sacred obligation. This, and this alone, is *to reason* like Christians. And the contrary seems to be that for which our Saviour tells his disciples in many words, "It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

I HAVE not time for any large application of this discourse; and hope that every thing I have said, is so plain and obvious as not to require it.—I cannot help, however, summing up the whole, in the language

guage

uage of the text, and observing to you the SERMON.
 beautiful *climax* in it, "Whatsoever things IV.

are true in themselves; really grave, honourable and venerable, consistent with moral rectitude and unspotted purity: Whatsoever things will tend to render you and your religion amiable and lovely among the sober part of mankind: Whatever things have been thought worthy of being reported for their imitation and improvement, be they the more private, or the more publick, and shining virtues: In short, every thing that has been justly celebrated, and applauded, and praised in the world: Let christians be perpetually thinking of these things, having them uppermost in their thoughts, ready upon every proper occasion to reduce into practice, reasoning and improving upon them, till they have brought them to their utmost extent and perfection."

What inward serenity and satisfaction must every man enjoy who believes in conformity to this! What an inestimable advantage is it, to live under such an excellent system of laws! And how justly does the gospel on account of its precepts, as

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well

SERM. well as doctrine deserve to be called

IV. dispensation of Grace!

WHAT a happy state would this present world be in, if these morals were universally practised! There would scarcely be any such thing in it, as want or misery; and here, as well as in the *New Jerusalem*, "all tears would be wiped away from our eyes." And, instead of the present wretchedness we see, introduced by wickedness, and the defect of moral righteousness, we should see nothing but harmony, peace, and friendship, and a generous communication of good offices; which no avarice, nor blind and undue affection for our offspring, would be able to interrupt.

BUT whatever be now the condition of this world, there is nothing more certain than that the happiness of the next will depend entirely upon a true christian behaviour here; that is, on the practice of the virtues I have mentioned, founded on the true faith of the gospel, and the motives contained therein. Without which we shall believe in Christ, and worship the Father through him, in vain; we shall be in very deed "unprofitable servants;" and

though

though we could appeal to him, that "we have prophesied in his name, and in his name have done many wonderful works,"

SERM.
IV.

yet we shall find that at the last day he will sift us, and that "God will take away our part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city," and from "the things which are written in the book" of the New Covenant.

Rev. xxi. 19.

T

H 2

SER-

SERMON V.

On the wisdom of a MAN.

J O B xxviii. 28.

But unto man be said, behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

SERM.
V.

THERE is no quality more excellent in itself, nor upon which mankind have universally set a greater value, than that of wisdom: They would be content to sacrifice almost every thing to the reputation of it; nay, many would rather suffer in their moral, than their intellectual characters: Though that indeed can proceed from nothing but a false notion of wisdom, since they have no real title to be called wise, who are only "wise to do evil, but to do good have no knowledge." Which general admiration

^a Jer. iv. 22.

tion of wisdom must arise from some principles within, whereby men naturally discern and relish what is excellent, and thus aspire to the resemblance of God himself, "who is only wise."^a

BUT though it be in general, for this reason, the just object of our admiration and our desires, there are several degrees of wisdom, which it would be the highest vanity and presumption in us to attempt, because they are the prerogative of God alone; in comparison of whom the wisest of mortal men may be said "to be but "of yesterday, and to know nothing."^b It is of this that *Job* speaks in the chapter where the text is, when he asks "where "shall wisdom be found? And where is "the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it "found in the land of the living. God "knoweth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof."^c—But though this be true with regard to the supreme Being, "who looketh unto the ends of "the earth, and seeth under the whole "heaven."^d Yet "he hath said unto

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"man,"

^a Rom. xvi. 27.^b *Job* viii. 9.^c ver. 12, 13,

23.

^d ver. 24.

SERM. "man," that there is a species of wisdom
 V. that is proper to him. For there can be
 no rational, or moral Being, but must have
 some end in view, and take some steps and
 measures in order to attain it. The ques-
 tion then is, what the end of man, and
 the proper means to attain that end, are.
 And upon enquiry we shall find it consist
 in "the fear of the Lord;" and that for
 man, "to depart from evil is true unde-
 rstanding."

AND yet the folly of mankind has ap-
 peared in all ages, in departing from this
 in order to obtain something else, which
 has only the glare, and the semblance of
 wisdom.

THIS is represented to be the unhappy
 mistake even of the first pair of mankind
 in paradise: Who thought it not enough
 "to fear the Lord," and to avoid the evil
 of eating the fruit he had forbidden, but
 were easily tempted to transgress, by the
 hope of a more extensive knowledge: And
 if they did not aspire to rival the wisdom
 of God himself; it has been the opinion
 of many divines, that they hoped, how-
 ever, thereby to equal those inferior gods,
 or to speak in the *Hebrew* idiom, the

ELOHIM^a, or angels who attended the **SERM.**
 PRESENCE of the Lord. But, as all false
 wisdom is prejudicial to the interests of
 men; it forfeited them their happiness,
 and drove them out from the garden of
 God, in which the fear of the Lord, their
 proper wisdom, would have preserved
 them.

THOUGH this is a very useful lesson for
 us, not to covet that wisdom which is
 above us; yet is it no reason why we
 should not endeavour after what is attain-
 able by beings of our order, and under
 such circumstances as we are. That there-
 fore will be the enquiry of this discourse

WHEREIN does the true wisdom of a
 MAN consist?—Which the text tells us is
 in the practice of religion. “But unto
 “man, he said, behold, the fear of the
 “Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from
 “evil is understanding.”

Now as our first parents, and many of
 their posterity since them, have reached

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for-

^a Lexicographers will tell us, the word עֵלֹהִים is used
 in the Bible not only, 1. for the true God; but likewise,
 2. for false gods or idols; 3. for angels; 4. for men in
 power. Particular places where it is used in these distinct
 senses, may be seen in *Castellus's Lexic. Heptaglot.*

SERM. forward towards that knowledge which

V. too "wonderful for them, and is so high

"they cannot attain to it;" there are many others, who more humble than they have placed it in much lower and inferior attainments, prostituting the name of wisdom to that, which, as St. James says, "is earthly, sensual, devilish:"^b As indeed when men once mistake, or reject *the true*, they will meet with many counterfeits transforming themselves into it. And there are many pretences thereto, which, upon enquiry, we shall find, do all fall vastly short of it; and which will be proper,

I. To expose; before I come to show,

II. Wherein it does really consist.

I. I SHALL observe to you some false pretences to wisdom, which do all fall vastly short of it.

How is this excellent quality, for instance, mistaken,

1st, WHEN it is placed in idle and useless speculations, which draw off the mind from what is more substantial, and worthy the studies and enquiries of rational beings?

Are

^a Ps. cxxxix. 6.

^b James iii. 15.

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i. 20.

Are the subtleties and sophistry of the SERM.
schools, for example, at all serviceable to V.

the finding out of true wisdom, or what help are they to solid understanding?

They may, in a sense, be called in the phrase of the writer just mentioned, "earth-

ly," because they are of no advantage to us in the road to the future life; but serve

only to raise a cloud of dust in our way, which often misleads us into the mischiev-

ous ways of bigotry and uncharitableness. They are "science falsely so called;"^a

and yet have many times usurped the names of wisdom, and *learning*; and men

have been ready to think that "wisdom

"should die with" the people possessed of it: Though those that are without it, may

"have understanding as well as they, and

"not be inferior to them."^b We may ask with the apostle, in comparison with

true and heavenly wisdom, "Where is the

"scribe, where is the disputer of this

"world?"^c The fear of God does not consist in "wisdom of words:" God hath

"chosen the foolish things of this world,

"to confound the wise, because the foolish-

"ness

^a 1 Tim. vi. 20.

^b Job xii. 3.

^c 1 Cor.

SERM. "hele of God is wiser than man."

V. In truth, these refined subtleties deserve no better name than that of folly, even upon supposition that they were to do no other hurt, than only to consume our time; But more especially are they so, whenever they tend to destroy the fear of God, and the love of one another, by inflaming and irritating the passions; filling us with wrath and malice, too readily vented in revilings, and evil speakings. There is no part of human learning that has any pretence to the name of wisdom, unless when it has a natural tendency to discover and display the works of God, and lead men to adore and worship Him, "who in wisdom hath made them all." So that true wisdom is never always to be found in the schools of the learned, nor true understanding with men of skill.

2dly, Which if it be true, some are ready to think, that then wisdom consists in the very reverse of this, and so they place theirs, in shunning every thing that has the air of pedantry, and affect some thing

On the wisdom of a MAN.

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thing more elegant and delicate, as they S E R M.
fancy, though it relate only to trifles: As V.
if diversions, sport, and the minuter follies
of life, were the business of learned and
wise men; placed here, with no other in-
tent, but that they might "eat, and
"drink, and rise up to play"—This
they imagine renders them superior to the
lower class of men, whose wisdom indeed
they will allow it is, to provide for their
families, and to get their bread by the sweat
of their brows. It gives them a gaiety and
vivacity infinitely more agreeable than the
formal, over-wise behaviour of one who is
of no more importance in their esteem,
than a mere book-worm. What has the
severity of the schools to do with the deli-
cacy and politeness of a man of taste?
And, if they must have any at all, why
let them have the wisdom of the merry
philosopher^b, who spent his time in laugh-
ing at the follies of the world about him,
rather than that of the other, who spent his
in melancholy and weeping^c—But *Solomon*,
who was much wiser than them both,
hath said "of laughter, it is mad, and of
"mirth,

¹ Cor. x. 7.

^b Democritus.

^c Heracitus.

SERM. "mirth, what doth it?" Indeed innocent gaiety and mirth are very necessary to relax and unbend the mind, and to prepare it for the graver and severer practices of wisdom: But to sport away our whole lives, what is it but a silly idle dream of pleasure; which, when we awake, must be succeeded by a long watch of pain and anxiety. This is the wisdom which St. James justly despises, and condemns as "sensual."

3dly, BUT there is another sort, extremely numerous, and of equal vanity and conceit with those already mentioned; namely, the worldly-wise, men of great shrewdness and sagacity in getting, and keeping the possessions of this world, making gold their idol, "and saying to the fine gold, 'thou art my confidence.'" And indeed, if the end these cunning people proposed were good, it must be acknowledged in justice to them, they take the properest methods to attain it; for as our Saviour has observed, "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of 'light.'" This too has among many

^a Eccl. ii. 2.

^b Job xxxi. 24.

^c Luke xvi. 8.

usurped the name of wisdom, and *prudence*; and if our existence were to end with this world, they could not be enough commended. But as it is; of what importance is it to trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; when none of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him.^a How then can all the skill and contrivance they make use of, the plots and snares they lay for others, and their wicked gains by the ruin of the fatherless and the widow, promote their well-being in the future life? When men are thus wise for themselves only, such wisdom is "earthly, sensual," and "devilish:" "Earthly," in that it is only heaping up treasures upon earth, but makes no provision "of the true riches:^b" "Sensual," because such riches only serve to purchase those things that gratify the senses and appetites, furnishing them "to live in pleasure upon the earth, and to be wanton:^c" "Devilish" too, when through avarice they are led to ruin the fatherless, and the widow, or any other of the creatures of God; the reverse

of

^a Ps. xlix. 6, 7. ^b Luke xvi. 11. ^c James v. 5.

SERM. of every thing that is god-like and divine

V. and the very exact resemblance of the devil, who "walketh about, seeking whom he, also, may devour;" and as many as have been thus "partakers of his nature" here, must hereafter be partakers of eternal punishment "with him and his angels."

BUT that can never be true wisdom which must end in misery; nay, which must hasten and urge it on.

WISDOM may be defined to be "proposing a worthy and valuable end and pursuing it by all the means which are most natural, and likely to attain that end."

Now the true end of man is happiness. It is his wisdom therefore to pursue the happiness which is suited to his nature which being rational, spiritual, and immortal; all the pretensions to wisdom we have considered will appear vain, for the reasons given under each of them, are at least partial; relating only to a small period of our existence; and therefore by this means the wisdom of a MAN; that is of the whole man. And although those things

On the wisdom of a MAN.

THE

are greatly allowable when kept within **SERM.**
proper bounds, and on proper occasions; **VI.**
yet become the very reverse of every thing
that can be called wise, when they do, as is
too commonly the case, engross the whole
of our attention.

MAY we not then sit down despairing
ever to find it, and ask in good earnest,
“Where shall wisdom be found, and
“where is the place of understanding?”
Imagining it to be vain advice to “get
“wisdom, and above all our getting to get
“understanding,” that, to seek for her,
is indeed to seek for hid treasure that will
never be found. But this would be an un-
just complaint; since it by no means fol-
lows, that because there are many coun-
terfeits, there is therefore no reality; but
rather the contrary; since every copy must
have some original, whether it be like it
or not.

AND we shall find the answer extremely
ready; if, before we give over the pursuit,
we proceed to enquire,

II. INTO the assertion of the text, that
“the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to
“depart from evil is understanding.”

FOR

SERM. For "the ways thereof are," in the

V. "ways of pleasantness; and all its

"are peace:" And I have already said that to take the most natural and steps in pursuit of happiness, is true wisdom.

SHOULD it here be asked, how "fear," which the apostle himself "hath torment," and is one of the uneasy and troublesome passions of the mind, be happiness? I answer; the question is founded on false representations of the fear of God, which the apostle was approving, but condemning; and that he made so many pursue happiness in the contrary to it, because they think "through" such a "fear, they shall be all their life-time subject to bondage. And who that has any taste of liberty would chuse to be a slave! But the true fear of the Lord hath none of this tormenting uneasiness in it.

FEAR is not only a very useful, but an absolutely necessary passion of the mind, planted in it, by its good and wise author, to prompt us to avoid all the evils that threaten our peace and tranquillity: Which

without such passion, or principle, we SERMON.
 might very easily fall into; and ought ne- V.
 ver to be troublesome, but where there is
 some other trouble more to be feared, and
 necessary to be avoided. Now the fear of
 God, according to the idea of that word in
 the *English* language, is designed only to
 lead men to shun the fatal consequences of
 his displeasure; and can never be uneasy,
 but when they have unruly appetites, which
 they have great inclination to indulge;
 and yet are afraid to indulge them on that
 account; or else arises from guilt, and the
 apprehension of punishment.

BUT if men have such unruly passions,
 which on the one hand are clamorous to
 be indulged; and on the other hand, they
 are afraid of punishment if they indulge
 them; it is but to exert their resolution,
 and controul, and subdue, them; which
 it is very far from an insuperable difficulty
 to do; and then the fear of God's displea-
 sure ceases of itself. For he is never angry
 with men to shew his sovereignty, and
 only because he will be angry; but merely,
 because sin is justly, and in the nature of
 things, the object of displeasure.

SERM.

V.

AND it will be allowed, that as though it is in itself a very useful passion, may exceed the bounds of reason, there may be a fear of God, which the apostle speaks of, exceeding the bounds of religion. I mean that of some, who have always such a dread of him upon their minds that they know not how to act, for fear he should be displeased. Not considering that the scriptures of God disprove the notion of his being a hard, rigorous master, governed by caprice, and displeased at one time with that which pleased him at another. A very unworthy notion of God! who is a kind and loving father, that takes well from his creatures every thing that they mean well.

AND therefore, in order thoroughly to understand what is meant by the fear of God, we must consider, what characters and relations he is represented under, and the duties that flow from them: And we shall find there are three principal ones, a father, a master, and a governor, which all demand a proper and suitable fear.

As a father, he is very tender of us, and provident of our welfare. As a master,

* See sermon second of this volume, p. 29, 30.

he requires indeed our service; but then it SERM.

is such, as, to use the language of our church,

is perfect freedom. As a governor, we

are accountable to him for our actions;

not only for those which relate more im-

mediately to himself, and are properly

called religious; but also for those which

regard ourselves, or society; and he will

reward, or punish us accordingly.—From

these relations to us, it is, that the obliga-

tions of our fear of him arise. But then

you see, it is such a fear as is due to a tender

indulgent father, whose displeasure an obe-

dient child would dread above all things,

and whose fear is mixt with love and gra-

titude; Or, to a kind, reasonable, and ge-

nerous master, whose service we should be

very unwilling to lose, on account of the

advantages and profits of it: Or, to a go-

vernor, whose authority is absolutely ne-

cessary to promote the peace and happiness

both of ourselves and society.

FROM all which the wisdom of this

“fear of the Lord” will evidently appear;

because God never requires any thing of us,

but what is designed to promote the peace

and happiness of our own minds; and is

only displeased with us when we break the

SERM. one, or forfeit the other: But such a love
 V. of him as tends to restore us to his own
 image, is the truest perfection and happiness of our nature; and where that agreeable passion of love is strongest, a rational fear of disobliging the object beloved, or losing his favour, though not the "fear that hath torment," will be equally strong.

AND this will shew us the propriety of expression in the text, "the fear of the Lord" to include the whole of religion. Because every part of our duty has relation to God; as our supreme judge, and the dispenser of rewards, and punishment in the future life, for which this is only a state of trial and probation.

THIS then must be the wisdom of a MAN.

FOR true wisdom consists in every being's acting according to it's own nature and circumstances. Would any one think him to be a wise *General*, who was more able to demonstrate a proposition of *Euclid*, than to take a city, or to save his own troops? The mathematician might be excellent, and we might admire him; but every one would despise and condemn the

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General. The case is the same with us, SERM.

We are not to aspire after the wisdom of V.
those agents that are superior to us: Nor
is it enough that we be as wise as the beasts
of the field, or reptiles and insects: And
yet *Solomon*, who was the wisest of men,
sends that boasted reasonable creature man,
to learn wisdom of them, "Go to the ant,
" thou sluggard, *says he*, consider her ways
" and be wise." No, it is our wisdom
to act up to the dignity of our nature;
practising those duties which flow from the
relation we stand in to God, as children,
servants, and subjects; and as beings com-
pounded of body and soul, who ought
not to gratify the appetites of the first, to
the hazard, and ruin of the latter.

In order to judge whether pleasure does
not certainly, and necessarily, arise from
these duties of religion; for I have all along
said, that the end of man is to pursue
rational and moral pleasure, let us for
once put religion out of the question; and
imagin, the present system of things to
have jumbled into existence by mere acci-
dent and chance; and that we were not
only uncertain whether there was a God,

I 3

our

SERM. our Father, our Master, our Governor

V.

whom it was our duty to fear, as it has been explained, or not; but were sure there was none: Alas! how would the cheerful face of things alter, and be changed into darkness, and confusion; an absolute uncertainty with respect to every circumstance in this; and impossibility of any hope of a future life!

I WILL not say, men could practise the cautious duties of morality. Many of the brute creation have peace, and quiet, and harmony among themselves. But what joy could we have, if there were no friendly, paternal hand to guide and manage our concerns; and to whom we could look for counsel, or support? What would become of the noble, pleasing thought of immortality? The innocent oppressed would have no conscious pleasure that there was a Being who at last would do him justice. The benighted traveller through the wilderness of this world, must wander on, without the least hope, nay, without a possibility of future day. In short, the moral world without a God, every wise being will fear and reverence; would be much more uncomfortable and dreary, than the

natural

On the wisdom of a MAN.

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SERM.

V.



natural world without the sun, or any other friendly luminary, to enliven it. And shall we deign, in consideration of these things, to mention the advantages to the guilty, that they would escape their deserved punishment?

I SHALL only observe farther, to evince the truth of what I am advancing concerning such a fear of God; that true wisdom must take in THE WHOLE of our existence and condition. No one in the affairs of this life is thought wise, who regards only the present moment; but takes no care, if he has it in his power, to guard against future evils, and lay in a stock of happiness. It must, surely, be the same with regard to the future life. And as it is the business of wisdom, to provide for possibilities, as well as certainties; it will be the same as to wisdom, whether a future state be *certain*, or barely *possible*.

LET us all therefore be persuaded to take that course, which is proper for rational, and immortal, creatures to take; by acting according to the excellent precepts of virtue and religion, which, from what has been said, must be the law of God to direct

SERMON. rect our feet into the paths of true happiness and pleasure.

V.



AND wherein any of us have, in the past, done iniquity, or committed any vice, or extravagance, reproachful to our reasonable nature; let us show our wisdom, not by obstinately persisting in it, or boasting of it, or of its scandalous consequences; but by departing from evil, and doing so no more. That, as wise men should, we may lay up for futurity, not "by treasuring up to ourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgments of God;"^a but "by seeking for glory, honour, and immortality, in a patient continuance in well-doing;"^b—"O men, were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"^c

FROM what has been said, we may observe the ignorance and monstrous folly of such as place wisdom in atheism, and in religion. All the flights of wit, and the finest imagination, in vain pretend to wisdom when destitute of the fear of God; but

more

^a Rom. ii. 5. - ^b 1b. ver. 7.

^c Deut. xxxii. 29.

On the wisdom of a MAN

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more especially when they dishonour him; **S**ee
by dressing up vice and presumptuous sin
in alluring, inviting colours. Nay, even
that noble study of nature, which though
truly called "philosophy," is yet but
"vain deceit," when through a super-
ficial observation of her works, men are
led to deny God's existence, and to blas-
pheme his power.

"LET none of these wise men glory in
their wisdom; but let him that glorieth,
glory in this," that he knows, and fears
the Lord, and is possessed of that wisdom
which "is from above, which is first pure,
then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be
entreated, full of mercy and good fruits,
without partiality, and without hypo-
crisy."

AND let none who have been trained up
in a pious and virtuous course of life, be
ashamed of their religion; and, through a
false modesty, be more afraid of prophane
and ludicrous men; nay, let them not be
"more afraid of them that could," even,
"kill the body, and after that have no
more that they can do, than of him
"who is able to destroy both body and
soul

^a Col. ii. 8.

^b Jer. 9. 23.

^c James iii. 17.

SERMON. "soul in hell." "A prudent man,"

V. *Solomon*, "foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on, and are punished."

LET all of us dare to be religious, without any vicious fear of appearing to be men of weak and timorous understanding. Let us avoid prophane and vain scoffs, and let our delight be with virtuous and good men, remembering that observation holy writ, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

FINALLY, let those who in time past have, with *Solomon*, "given their hearts to know madness and folly," give up themselves for the future, as he did, "to know wisdom" also; that so by a remaining course of piety and virtue, they may become "wise unto salvation."

THAT this may be the wisdom, and happiness of us all; may God Almighty of infinite mercy, grant, through *Jesus Christ*, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

^a Matt. x. 28.

^b Prov. xxii. 3.

^c 1 Tim. iii. 15.

SERMON VI.

On the character of the disciple
whom Jesus loved.

JOHN xiii. 23.

*Now there was leaning on Jesus bosom, one
of his disciples whom Jesus loved.*

TH E Saviour of the world, who SERMON.
was before all ages in the bosom VI.
of the Father, selecting one of
his disciples from the rest, as the distin-
guished object of his love, and to receive
peculiar marks of favour, may excite a
reasonable and praise-worthy curiosity, to
know, both who, and what manner of
man he was ; Especially as it may be pre-
sumed they had all of them proper disposi-
tions and qualifications, on which account
they were chosen to be disciples—For it
cannot be supposed to be an instance of
that

SERM. that capricious affection natural parents often show to a favourite child; sometimes without any pretended reason, oftentimes against reason; and, not unusually founded on infirmities, nay on follies, more deserving chastisement, than love. But our Saviour, who had the nicest knowledge of human nature, and "knew perfectly what was in man," certainly saw some superior qualities, some very lovely dispositions, that gained his esteem, and induced him to take one of his followers thus for his bosom-friend.

WHAT those qualities and dispositions were, will be a very useful enquiry for us. Who likewise profess ourselves to be the disciples and followers of the same Master, to whose friendship and esteem we should have the highest ambition, to aspire. And who, though we have not the honour of that personal converse with him here below; may however hope and expect to be distinguished by him at the general judgment, according to our dispositions and behaviour; and to have our seats in the kingdom of heaven nearer to him, according

disciple whom Jesus loved.

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ording as we have excelled in the virtues
his religion.

SERM.
VI

And I am the rather inclined to enter into
his subject, as a noble writer of our own
country seems to have reflected on our
only religion, for "taking so little notice
of some of the most heroic virtues," as
he calls them; among which he reckons
that of private friendship.*—But sure he
was strangely partial not to mention the
circumstance in the text, as well as the
friendship of *David*, and *Jonathan*, under
the *Jewish* dispensation. The example of
the founder of our religion pleads as strong-
ly in its favour, as any precepts could have
done: And to lay down injunctions for
friendship, would be as unnecessary as to lay
down rules about perception or feeling; it
being so natural, that perhaps no generous
breast was ever without it: Nay, even the
vicious are often drawn into it by a simi-
tude of their vices and follies. But from
the example before us, we may collect the
truest incitement to it; and those god-like

dis-

* Private friendship, and zeal for the publick, and our
country, are virtues purely voluntary in a christian. They
are no essential parts of his charity.

Lord *Shaftsbury's* essay on the freedom of wit, and
humour. Vol. 1. p. 98, 99. Sixth Edition.

SERMON. dispositions on which, alone, a wife

VI. will bestow it.

I SHALL therefore in the following course, endeavour to show,

I. THAT the favourite disciple had a lovely temper of mind, as was particularly recommended in the religion of his Master. And from his writings shall show,

II. THAT he had thoroughly entered into the genius of his religion; embracing those principles which give the greatest honour, and lustre, and beauty to it.

III. AND I hope this will not be thought a useless enquiry, or a mere subject of speculation; since in the conclusion I shall make such observations, and draw such inferences, as may be useful both for the instruction of our judgments, and the conduct of our lives.

I. THE circumstance mentioned in the text is referred to in the latter end of the gospel, in such a manner as to show that it was not mentioned in an accidental way

disciple whom Jesus loved.

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but as a circumstance well worthy of peculiar notice and regard; and that the person was St. *John* himself, the author of this gospel; though by a singular and very amiable modesty, he names not himself, but gives his readers to understand it, by circumlocution only, and description.

SERMON VI.

AND this remarkable modesty of his, was doubtless one of the reasons for which our Saviour loved him; no virtue being more interesting and engaging.—The very passage of which the text is a part, is a remarkable instance of it.

WHEN our Saviour at the paschal supper, “testified to his disciples that one of them should betray him;” though they were, doubtless, all very uneasy at it, and looked one on another,” as we are told, “doubting of whom he spake;” yet this disciple, who then sat next to him, and, according to the custom of the country, “leaned on his bosom,” was too modest to question him about it, before he should think proper to explain himself; “till *Peter*,” who was of a much bolder and forwarder disposition, “beckened,” and made signs to him to do it.

As

SERM.

VI.

As small as this circumstance may appear, it may in a great measure let us into the character of St. *John*, showing him to have the disposition our Saviour has thought proper to make the subject of a particular precept to his disciples, when he put forth "a parable to them that were bidden," "his marking how they chose out the chief rooms," on the contrary, exhorting his disciples to keep themselves backwards, and "to go rather, and sit down in the lowest room, that when that bad them cometh, he might say unto them, Friends go up higher, so they might have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with them." Our Saviour thought this familiarity so engaging, as to induce the master of the feast to treat them with particular distinction: Not like those who esteem a modest man, at the same rate as he estimates himself; and leave him in quiet possession of the low rank of his retirement. It is not so among the worthy and generous part of mankind. With a noble simplicity, they judge of men by the standard only of their virtues and abilities, and regulate

disciple whom Jesus loved.

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gulate their behaviour towards them accordingly. Our Saviour who exhorts his disciples "to learn of him, for he was meek, and lowly of heart," selects this meek and modest disciple to be nearest himself and to "lean on his bosom."

Thus likewise in the history of the Jews, we find that when God determined to select that people from the rest of the world, to answer the wise purposes of his providence, and his grace; he chooses Moses, the meekest of them all, to be their law-giver and their guide; and even compels him to it, notwithstanding all his excuses and diffidence of himself at Mount Horeb.

This was the temper of this disciple, as we see it in the history of his life.

II. LET us now, in the second place, look into his writings. And we shall find universal love and charity, and meekness, and humility, the principal subjects of them: And it will be allowed that no kind of writing shows so much the character, and disposition, and heart of a man, as the epistolary kind, to which I shall confine myself. No wonder then our Saviour,

K

whose

SERM. whose principal precept was that of love
 VI inasmuch that he calls it a new com-
 mandment, "that he gave to his disciples
 "to love one another," should have
 great a regard to him for entering, as
 have already said, so readily and thorough-
 ly into the genius of his religion; and in-
 bibing those principles that give the great
 honour, and beauty, and lustre to it.

THE first epistle general of St. John
 designed to recommend to mankind the
 imitation of the perfections of God, "Who
 "he tells us is light, and in whom is
 "darkness at all."—From this repre-
 sentation of the universal Father of mankind
 he inculcates the most instructive lesson of
 purity and virtue; it being impossible for
 those "who walk in darkness," that is
 ignorance, or vice, "to have fellowship
 "with that light." An idea, which a
 mind is capable of, but what must itself be
 gloriously illuminated by the rays of the
 universal source of wisdom, and purity,
 and beneficence.

NOR is this an unintelligible piece of en-
 thusiastical and rapturous devotion, con-
 ceived only in the mind, but not to be

* John xiii. 34.

† John i. 5.

‡ Ib. ver. 6.

disciple whom Jesus loved.

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explained or communicated to another; SERM.

nor yet a precept impracticable by creatures formed with the passions and appetites we are formed with: But exactly

VI.

suit to our nature, whether we consider it as human, social, or spiritual. As if it were on purpose designed to obviate any objection against the disciples of our Saviour, as visionaries and enthusiasts. For he has reduced it to the most plain and obvious principles of universal social virtue; referring it, after the example of his Master, to that precept just mentioned, which he has made the characteristick of his disciples. His words are these: "A new

"commandment I write unto you because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes." "Whoever

K 2

will

SERM. will compare these sentiments with the precepts taught, and the principles inculcated by our blessed Saviour in the gospels, will find it impossible for any one to conform more exactly to the model there laid down.

A SIMILITUDE of disposition and behaviour is the truest, perhaps the only foundation of friendship. From whence we might *presume* that St. *John* had thoroughly imbibed these principles, though we had no account of his life or writings—But as it is, we are not left to presumption alone, but we have demonstration before our eyes.

To mention every benevolent, as well as just, sentiment, would be to transcribe all his epistles. What humanity and sweetness of disposition is there in the joy he expresses at finding “the children of the elect lady walking in the truth!” What a generous and manly satisfaction in the hospitality and constancy of his well-beloved *Gaius*! What a noble commendation, sufficient to inspire him to persevere in that beautiful compliment, “Beloved, “I wish above all things, thou mayest prosper, and be in health, even as thy

“soul

disciple whom Jesus loved.

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"soul prospereth!" These sentiments will SERM.
always captivate a delicate reader; and VK
raise the same regard for the apostle his
Master had for him; and show him to be
indeed of the character which every virtu-
ous man will always love.

BUT there is another passage relating to
God, the adorable object of all religious
worship, which I cannot help taking no-
tice of; because by it we shall not only
entertain the most pure, and holy, and
venerable notions of him already mentioned,
"that he is light, and in him is no dark-
ness at all;" but if I may so say, even
familiarize him to us; for it tells us that
he is not only lovely but "love" itself;
"God is love." This removes the super-
stitious awe and dread which are apt to in-
vade the mind of many, and quite bewil-
der them, when they contemplate his un-
searchable perfections, and his ways that
are past finding out.

HIS necessary existence, his eternity, his
immensity, lose us in amazement and
wonder: But love is an idea intimate with
all, and of our acquaintance: We can be
at no loss for gratitude, for the best return

K 3

in

^a 3 *John*, ver. 2.

^b 1 *John* iv. 8.

SERMON. in our power, or for the exactest imitation; but it will at once inspire us with every principle, and every practice of religion: We shall need very little study or reasoning about it; but it will as it were overpower us with the love of God, and of our neighbour; "on which two commandments," our Saviour tells us, "hang all the law, and the prophets;" and this disciple argues in the same manner, "he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Such was the "disciple whom Jesus loved."

AND we find, he not only distinguished him with his most familiar friendship while living, taking him even to his bosom; he likewise in the agonies of death upon the cross, he gave him the highest mark of his good opinion, and affection, bequeathing him to his own mother as a son; and giving him the honour to take care of her after his death. And he was not of so sparingly a disposition as to think it a burdensome legacy; he had not a moment's hesitation about the trouble or the expence;

* Matt. xxii. 40.

* John iv. 16.

disciple whom Jesus loved.

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but "from that hour that disciple took her to his own home."

VI

In this character then we may look upon him as in the place even of his Master himself. And what exalted ideas must we have of the man selected to supply the loss of so dear a son, so divine a comfort, so supreme a support! We cannot sure have so little regard to his memory, as not to enquire whether there are any other traces of his history.

ECCLESIASTICAL writers then tell us, that he persevered in his attachment to the religion his Master came from heaven to instruct us in, through the most grievous persecutions under the Emperor *Domitian*; and it is plain from the scripture itself, that he was banished to the isle of *Patmos* in the *Ægean Sea*, where he wrote his *Revelation*. And the same ecclesiastical writers tell us, that he wrote his *epistles* there too, which are so full of the generous sentiments, and which breathe the god-like disposition that has been mentioned. An additional circumstance in his favour; for persecution and hardship are apt to have a contrary effect, to discompose and sower

K 4.

the

* *John* xix. 27.

* *Rev.* i. 9.

SERM.

VI

the mind. But he bore his afflictions, not only with as much patience and constancy as any of the disciples, but longer too, outliving them all. He planted several churches in *Asia*, and many years exercised the apostolical office in that quarter of the world; residing chiefly at *Ephesus*, where he died in so infirm an old age; that it is reported, his last sermons were little more than a continued, and, to his auditors, well-known repetition of that single favourite precept of christianity, "children, love one another."

BUT I must not end my account of the disciple here; and imitate ordinary biographers, by disguising any part of his character; for notwithstanding all that has been said in praise of him, to account for our Saviour's peculiar regard to him, and for universal benefit and instruction, it must be acknowledged that he had his faults, and one of them so enormous, it drew from his Master one of the severest rebukes that ever proceeded out of his mouth.

FOR he was not only one of those disciples, who had ambitious hopes of preferment

disciple whom Jesus loved.

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ment in a temporal kingdom, and con-

tended with the rest "which of them

"should be greatest in it:" But was

likewise one of the two, who desired leave

"to pray for fire from heaven to con-

"sume" the *Samaritans*: Which filled

our blessed Lord with so much indigna-

tion, that, notwithstanding the motives

that induced them to it, "he turned, and

"rebuked them, and said, Ye know not

"what manner of spirit ye are of."

I WILL just mention the circumstance

that we may see in what manner his zeal

misled him; and for the sake of some

useful lessons we may learn from it.

As our Saviour was returning from the

mountain where he had been transfigured,

in order to go to *Jerusalem*, the place of

his approaching sufferings; it so happened

that his nearest way was through a village

of *Samaria*, into which "he sent messen-

"gers before him" to provide him ac-

commodations. But the *Samaritans*, who

dissented from the *Jews* upon a dispute,

whether *Jerusalem*, or mount *Gerizim*

were the place where they should build a

temple for the worship of God; finding

our

* *Luke* xxii. 24.

* *Ib.* ix. 55.

SEEN our Saviour to be a *Jew*, and going to
VI. *Jerusalem*, refused him the common
 accommodations of a traveller. This rude
 and uncourteous treatment irritated St. *John*
 and his brother *James*, so far as to make
 the cruel request that has been mentioned.
 They thought nothing could be so provo-
 king as to refuse their Master, who came
 from heaven on the kindest errand God
 Almighty had ever sent to mankind.—In
 the height of their zeal for their Master's
 honour, they recollected the example of a
 prophet inspired by God, who twice pray-
 ed for fire from heaven, to consume a base
 sent by the king of the same country where
 they were, to take him. They thought
 there was a difference between their Master
 and any prophet; and that the interposition
 of heaven, granting *Elijah's* prayer, sancti-
 fied the request, putting the propriety, in
 religion, of it beyond dispute.—And yet
 notwithstanding all these seeming pro-
 motives, our Saviour “turned and re-
 buked them.” The spirit of perfec-
 tion was in his judgment the wickedest of
 all spirits: And though *Elijah's* prayer was
 granted; and “the fire came from hea-
 ven, and consumed” his adversaries;

disciple whom Jesus loved.

indicating the honour of the most high God, so shamefully insulted by the idolatry of their king, whose commands they were fulfilling: Yet the same spirit did not become the proselytes of his religion, who came from heaven "not to destroy men's lives but to save them:" And this violence of temper appeared the worse, in a disciple of so mild, so meek, so generous a disposition, and who so well knew the better genius of his Master's religion.

It would be too great an excursion from my subject, to explain the full meaning of our Saviour's rebuke; which was not of their ignorance, but of their vice: However, it will be very proper for us all to consider, in our own minds, the flagrancy of this crime, in any shape, or any degree, that could extort so severe a censure of so beloved a friend; and who had not offended from an habitual disposition, but from a sudden excursion of zeal. And likewise it should teach us to be very cautious of following the examples even of persons inspired by God, in any thing of this kind; their examples being no rule to us, because what they did, they did ^{on} in "the

140 On the character of the
St. John, "the name of the LORD;" that is, by his
V. immediate direction, to answer the wants
ends of his government. A province which
no one has the least right to interfere
ip, unbidden, and of his own accord.

III. I PROCEED to make such observations, and draw such inferences from what
has been said, as may be of use both for
the instruction of our judgments, and the
conduct of our lives.

AND the first observation shall be, upon
what has been last said, of the faults of
St. John.

FROM this we may learn to make proper
allowances for the weakness of human na-
ture. We find our Saviour, notwithstanding
these faults of St. John, did not with-
draw his friendship from him: He rebuked
him, 'tis true; but he still continued to
love him. Contrary to this, we often meet
in common life, with persons who break
with a favourite friend, or disinherit a dar-
ling child, for a single fault; and yet they
themselves are persons of great frailty and
infirmity! But this is not after the example
of the blessed Jesus, "who knew no sin,

" nei-

disciple whom Jesus loved.

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neither was guile found in his mouth." SERM.

And yet notwithstanding his own purity

VL

and innocence, and the high commission

he bore from his Father, which would give

him the best title to exercise severity, he

has left us the mildest precepts; and set

us the noblest example of forgiveness and

charity.

LET us universally learn the same tem-

per, despising, as well as avoiding, the pi-

tiful, censorious, suspicious disposition that

mixes so much with the conversation of

the vain, the illiterate, and the frail.

BUT principally let us learn to admire

the same qualities in others, and cultivate

them in ourselves, that gained the love,

and esteem, and friendship, of the Saviour

of the world. The way to be loved, is to

be lovely: And it is not the external beauty

of the human form, improved by all the

additional ornaments of fancy and contri-

vance that will gain the affection of the

mind. No nor yet the superior qualities

of wisdom, or learning, or power: The

softer and gentler dispositions of meekness,

and modesty, good-will and generosity set

even these off. And certainly there must

be

SERM. be something extremely engaging in the
 VI. qualities, that could draw our Lord into
 such a particular affection, to this small
 disciple. The apostles were all of them
 chosen to be so, not by an arbitrary elec-
 tion, but because they were the fittest
 and properest, for the employment : It
 fit and proper as they all were, we find
 Master had a favourite, and may there-
 be very sure, they had not all of the
 equally the same qualities, because
 whom God hath appointed to be the judges
 of all the earth, could not but do right.

To enter into a comparison of St. John's
 character with that of the rest of the dis-
 ciples, would be invidious, as well as
 too tedious. But we have seen both
 his sentiments and disposition were. No
 yet did he want those qualifications, which
 the world are apt to think superior, of
 wisdom and knowledge. But these
 qualities that however they may begot
 esteem and veneration of others; are by
 means apt to attract their love : Nor can
 they possibly attract that of Him who
 wisdom itself, and in comparison with
 whom, "the wisest of mortal men" may

disciple whom Jesus loved.

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be said "to be but of yesterday, and to know nothing."

VI.

LET us, after the example of our blessed Lord and Master, love and value the same gentle dispositions. Let not our friendships be capricious and arbitrary, but founded on the same principles: And let us endeavour, by the same qualities to gain the friendship and esteem of mankind. They alone will recommend us to the valuable part of them; nor will they in general fail to do it.

BUT whatever be the caprice of mankind; this we may be assured of, that they will infallibly recommend us to the love of Jesus, who, though ascended to the bosom of the Father, knows our dispositions, and will love, and reward, us accordingly. The same purity, modesty, and humility of mind; the same just, and venerable, and amiable, notions of Almighty God; the same benevolent and friendly instructions; the same sympathy and compassion; the same firmness, and resolution, and constancy, will always appear to him in the same light; and raise us to the most exalted places in the kingdom of glory; to the seats nearest himself.

SERM.

VI.

LET the hope and prospect hereof be always uppermost in our minds. Assure nothing can possibly excite us to the practice of virtue, if the love of *Jesus* will not inspire us ! If the favour of the universal Father of mankind will not engage us. And let us not only aspire to this honour ourselves ; but let us do every thing in our power to excite a generous emulation of the same spirit in others. After the example of the beloved disciple, Let us " have " no greater joy than that they walk in the " truth ; " and pray that universal virtue may flourish, ennobling the whole human race ; shedding its kindly influence on them here ; and giving us the transporting prospect of an universal meeting above that not only we ourselves, but all, may be partakers of the happiness of those whom "*Jesus* loveth."

SER.

SERMON VII.

On the true nature of relationship.

M A T T. xii. 49, 50.

And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren—For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven; the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

OUR Saviour when he was here on S E R M.
V I I.
earth, did strictly fulfil all righteousness both positive and moral; and it is particularly taken notice of in the gospel, that he went "down to Nazareth" with his parents; and was subject unto "them." When therefore we read of any thing in his character, either as a private person, or as a teacher of the people, that differs from the common notions of

L

mora-

* Luke ii. 51.

SERM. morality; we are not to suppose, it and
 VII. from any defect in his system; but, that
 he was either rectifying some vulgar mistakes and deceptions; or else refining upon the commonly received opinions.

It cannot be supposed that he is either taking away, or lessening, a proper regard to relative duties, particularly those to parents, and to brothers, and to sisters; but forasmuch as he had observed too narrow and contracted, a spirit among men, confining their good offices to their own families, or interrupting the duties they owe to others, by too great an attention to them; he meant, to enlarge their notions on this subject, and lead them to consider all the good and obedient children of God who is the Father of the whole race of mankind, as being thereby closely and nearly related to us; and for that reason all the good offices in our power are due to them. But a sordid selfish temper, which would confine, or collect, all good to its own individual person, is forbidden in the precept, that "we should love our neighbour as ourselves."

Lev. xix. 18. Matt. xxiii. 39.

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THE occasion of the words I have read **SERM.**
was this. He had been discoursing to the **VII.**
multitude upon many serious and important subjects; answering their questions; correcting their mistakes; removing their doubts or difficulties; and by the plainness and power of his conversation, had brought upon himself the ill-will of the Scribes and Pharisees, whose hypocrisy upon many occasions he had discovered; and they missed no opportunity of showing their resentment. This much alarmed the fears and apprehensions of his mother, and his brethren, who did not yet know his character as the Messiah, nor the true nature of that office; and he, continuing to speak boldly to the multitude, *St. Mark* expressly tells us, "His friends went out to lay hold of him, for they said he is beside himself." This was the same day, and but a little before the conversation in which they found him engaged; which was one of the boldest he had ever held, charging the Pharisees now, not only with hypocrisy, but with blasphemy against the Holy Ghost: A crime, "not to be forgiven either in this world, or in the

L 2

" world

SERM. "world to come."—This gave fresh

VII. occasion to the fears of his mother and brethren; and, as "they could not come at him for the press," they sent to him "desiring to speak with him," undoubtedly, with the design they had been formed, of "laying hold on him." Upon which he takes occasion to tell them, and the multitude, that the duty was about, was of much stronger obligation than his private regard to them; being about his heavenly Father's business; bringing home his children to their duty to him; and that whoever did their duty must be considered by him as the nearest of all relations.

From whence we see his neglecting and putting a slight on, his mother and his brethren, arose not from any defect of duty to them, but from their acting wrong and mistaken part; interrupting him in, and endeavouring to restrain him from, what he could not have neglected upon any consideration whatsoever. And as the maxims our Saviour lays down, and the rules he went by, are equally necessary for the conduct of all the professors of his

* Matt. xii. 32.

* Ib. ver. 46.

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is religion; we are to learn from this SERM.
passage the true nature of relationship;— VII.

by no means to encourage any one in negligence or indifference to the relations of blood and consanguinity; but to enlarge our notions on that subject, and excite us to consider all good and virtuous men as so related to us, that we ought to do them all the service in our power.

In discoursing on this subject, I shall

I. MAKE some general observations on the nature of relationship; and show what the scriptures have taught concerning the particular duties children owe to their parents, and as brothers and sisters, to each other. And,

II. TAKE occasion from thence to explain what our Saviour meant to teach us by the passage before us,

I. I SHALL make some general observations on the nature of relationship; and show what the scriptures have taught concerning the particular duties children owe their parents, and to each other as brothers and sisters.

SERM.

VII. For it is on the right understanding only of the duties owing to such relations that we can form a just judgment of the text. And it is part of the worst character any where given in scripture, to be "without natural affection."

RELATIONS may be considered as

1st, NATURAL.

2^{dly}, CIVIL. And,

3^{dly}, MORAL.

1st, NATURAL relations, are those to whom God, in our inward make and constitution, has given us either different, or at least, much stronger affections than those we have for other persons; the most remarkable of all which, is that of parents to their offspring.

2^{dly}, CIVIL relations, are those arising from good policy in states and kingdoms to lead the several members of them to defend, or support one another.

3^{dly}, MORAL relation, is that in which all rational creatures stand to one another as children of the same Creator, and heirs of the same heavenly inheritance.

Now

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Now the first of these, natural relationship, is by far the strongest of all, considered in itself; though it ought not to interfere with, or obstruct, the duties owing to the rest. It is the strongest, because it has many additional duties over and above what are due to the others; and the civil relationship is still stronger than the moral, which last however is universal. And yet we see, our Saviour has put that which is due to virtuous and religious men, "those who do the will of his Father which is in heaven," upon a level with the first; "the same is my mother, and sister, and brother."

THE general intent and purport of relationship, is to prevent the confusion that must arise without precise and determinate rules for providing for the helpless, educating the young, and succeeding to inheritances. It is a common observation, that what is every body's business, is nobody's business; and we see a thousand things neglected, from an imagination that others might do them as well as we; and if they should, we might take an unnecessary trouble. And this is an undeniable reason why every man should have a fixed,

SERM. settled, indispensable part to act in society

VII. from whence he should not deviate, and

in which no one else should interfere. And

to this we see both nature and reason assenting, and mutually aiding one another in the execution. The first care of the

young is a very troublesome task; which though reason would oblige us to, it might however be willing to shift off, as far, and

as long, as it could. To provide against

which, God has given us affections much

stronger than reason itself; often prevail-

ing, where there is little, or none of the

other; and sometimes getting the better of

it, where there is a great deal.

AND so admirable is the human com-

position; that, though one cannot call the

reverence of parents a natural affection,

yet, the great Author of it has given us

from our earliest years, a prejudice in fa-

vour of social virtue; gratitude to them

for their care of our education, being one,

if not the very first, rational principle that

operates in us, and gives us so strong an

attachment, as usually passes for natural:

And acting contrary to it, being disobedient

to parents, is thought one of the most

heinous of all crimes. Inasmuch that

there

there have been countries, where no law S. 11. 12.
has been provided against a crime which VII.
was thought to be too inhuman for any
man, however villainous, to perpetrate.
And if it has ever happened to be carried to
so great a height, as that a child has mur-
dered a parent, they have erased the whole
city where it was done; and the rest of
the inhabitants removed their effects to a
great distance, imagining the most dread-
ful judgments of heaven to hang over it.

FROM this natural affection on the one
side, and this gratitude on the other, arise
those reciprocal duties of parental care,
and filial obedience. The latter of which
will exert itself, not only in the highest
reverence, and rational performance of all
the commands of a parent; but in all pos-
sible succour, and help, and comfort in
the decline of life, when they become as
helpless, through the weakness and infir-
mities of age, as their children were in
their first infancy, when the breast pre-
vented them, and the tenderest solicitude,
and most unwearied application, reared
them up to manhood.

AND this is a disposition we find migh-
tily encouraged, and strongly enforced in
the

154 On the true nature of relations

S. & A. M. the scripture, "Honour thy father, and

VII. "thy mother," says the fifth command-

ment, "that thy days may be long in the

"land; which the Lord thy God giveth

"thee." And it was one of the Levitical

laws, "Every one that curseth his father,

"or his mother, shall be surely put to

"death: He hath cursed his father, or his

"mother; his blood shall be upon him:"

Or, if he should happen to escape, *Solomon*

represents it, as if all nature would abhor

him, and join to punish him; "The eye

"that mocketh at his father, and despiseth

"to obey his mother, the ravens of the

"valley shall pick it out, and the young

"eagles shall eat it." And there is a

story of a very signal and remarkable ble-

sing that attended one of the *Jewish* fami-

lies for obeying a precept of their father,

that has no apparent reason to us; and that

was, the house of the *Rechabites*, whose

"father *Jonadab*, the son of *Rechab*, com-

"manded them, saying, ye shall drink no

"wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever.

"Neither shall ye build house, nor sow

"seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any;

but

* *Exod.* xx. 12.
xxx. 17.

* *Lev.* xx. 9.

* *Prov.*

"but all your days ye shall dwell in *Servants*."—Which when they had been careful to perform; the history adds, "Thus
"saith the Lord of hosts, the God of
"Israel, because ye have obeyed the com-
"mandment of *Jonadab* your father, and
"kept all his precepts, and done accord-
"ing to all that he hath commanded you:
"Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts
"the God of *Israel*, *Jonadab* the son of
"Rechab shall not want a man to stand
"before me for ever."

So likewise in the *New Testament*, we find when our Saviour was discovering, and reprov-
ing, the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, he instances in this very thing;
their perverting the duty of children to their parents by their traditions, as the
wickedest, and most scandalous, prevarication of all: "And he said unto them,
"Full well ye reject the commandment of
"God, that ye may keep your own tra-
"dition. For *Moses* said, Honour thy
"father and thy mother; and whoso
"curseth father or mother, let him die the
"death. But ye say, if a man shall say
"to his father or mother, it is *corban*,
"that is to say a gift, by whatsoever thou
"mightest

* *Jer.* xxxv. 6, & seq.

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SERM. "mightest be profited by me, he shall be

VII. "free; and ye suffer him no more to do

"ought for his father or his mother:

"Making the word of God of none effect,

"through your tradition which ye have

"delivered."—And when St. Paul is de-

scribing the abominable defection of the

Gentile world from the knowledge of God,

and the practice of virtue, he mentions it

as one of the most glaring instances of a

reprobate mind, that they were "diso-

"bedient to parents:"^b Which he again

mentions as one of the frightful signs

thereof, when he foretels to *Timothy*, that

"in the last days, perilous times shall

"come."^c And in another of his epistles,

he enjoins the contrary without any limi-

tation, "children obey your parents in all

"things:"^d And, not only mentions it as

a natural, but as an essential, duty of the

christian religion, "Children, obey your

"parents," "in the Lord."

FROM all which we see, that how much

soever the christian religion refines on the

common principles of morality, it has

not the least tendency to destroy, or lessen,

them: But on the contrary, leaves them

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^a Matt. xv. 4, & seq. ^b Rom. i. 13. ^c 2 Tim.

iii. 2. ^d Col. iii. 20.

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as it found them, and is peculiarly careful SERM.
to promote them. VII.

THE other relations mentioned in the text, brother and sister, or the children of the same parents, have no precept indeed in scripture relating to them; but are trusted solely to natural affection, habit, custom, and the insensible union, which constant associating in the same family, at the same table, and in the same school of discipline and education, tends to produce. But though there be no express precept concerning their particular duties to each other; there are such passages as evidently take for granted that there should be the strongest love and affection between them. The persons who are most likely to have an interest with, and to prevail upon one another, are thus sum'd up by *Moses*;
" If thy brother, the son of thy mother,
" or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife
" of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as
" thine own soul, entice thee secretly ; "
and so on. And the Psalmist mentions his behaviour towards his enemies, when they were afflicted, so extremely different from what he met with from them, in this manner,

SERM. ner, " But as for me, when they were

VII. " sick, my cloathing was sack-cloth,

" humbled myself with fasting; I behaved

" myself as though he had been my friend

" or brother; I bowed down heavily, as

" one that mourneth for his mother."

Solomon describes the force of friendship, it's greatest advantage, by observing, that

" there is a friend that sticketh closer than

" a brother." And the judgment de-

nounced against "*Jeboiakim* the son of

" *Josiah* king of *Judah*, was, that they

" should not lament for him, saying, Ah,

" my brother, or, ah sister;" but " he

" should be buried with the burial of his

" as."

FROM all which passages, it is plain, what opinion the sacred writers had of these relations, and how closely they thought them allied together. And I have collected them in this manner, in order to throw the stronger light on the text, " For whoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother."

^a *Psf.* xxxv. 14.
28, 19.

^b *Prov.* xviii. 24.

^c *Jer.* xiii.

II. THE duties, then; arising from these natural relations, being so plainly and obviously supposed, allowed, and enforced by revelation, will show us what our Saviour means by those words that are the subject of this discourse; namely, that we ought to do good offices of the same nature to all good and virtuous persons, succouring, helping, comforting them in every distress, in every time of need. And therefore we find the books of the *New Testament* full of exhortations to "brotherly love;" and whenever they have occasion to speak of men in general, they always do it by the name of brethren.

THE *Jews* had carried their prejudices to a very great length; so far as to confine all their good offices within their own tribes. And particularly, there was so great a reserve between them and the *Samaritans*, on account of a religious dispute between them, that they had no dealings with each other. They had forgot the common relation of humanity, and that they were all children of the same Father, even God. To show them their mistake herein, our Saviour having told a certain

SERMON. lawyer, which was the great comment
 VII. ment of the law, and which was like
 to it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour
 thyself;" and being farther asked, Who
 my neighbour? gives for instance this very
 particular case of a good and merciful Sa-
 maritan, who, in spite of this prejudice,
 had shown the tenderest care of a poor
 Jew that "had fallen among thieves,
 "who had stripped him, and wounded
 "him, and left him half dead, pouring
 "oil into his wounds, setting him on his
 "own beast, leading him to an inn, and
 "giving money with which they should
 "take care of him; and promising, that
 "whatever more was necessary to be re-
 "mended, at his return he would re-
 "burse them." And all this, after two
 of the poor man's own countrymen had
 seen him without the least compassion,
 and passed by on the other side; to the
 great scandal of their sacred function, being
 no other than a Priest and a Levite; who
 not improbably, like certain priests in other
 churches, did all they could to widen, and
 keep alive the difference. But our Saviour
 on the contrary, when he had asked the
 lawyer, "Which he thought was neigh-
 "bour

On the true nature of relationship. 161

hour unto him that fell among thieves, *St. Matt.*
and he said, he that showed mercy on *VII.*
him, concludes the whole conversation
with this instruction, "Go thou and do
likewise."

CHRISTIANITY allows of no prejudices
of this kind. On the contrary, it has been
objected to, for having given no partial
precepts, of friendship, for example, and
love of our country. Not that it is averse
either to the one or to the other, but its
benevolence is universal, and as diffusive
as the air and light, that visit all the crea-
tures of God. It considers mankind as
one family, and all as "members one of
another." And this was literally the
fact among the *only true* primitive christ-
ians, "They were of one heart, and of
one soul; neither said any that ought
of the things he possessed was his own;
but they had all things common."

THERE has been something like this
extensive benevolence in other parts of the
world, though not quite so universal.
The *Romans* were remarkable, even the
lowest of them, for the love of their coun-
try, which they thought should be infi-
nitely

* *Luke* x. 30, & *seq.*

† *Acts* iv. 32.

SEEM. nitely stronger than that of any private
 VII. relation whatsoever; and they not only
 called, but considered, it as their mother
 that brought them forth, and nursed, and
 trained them up.

AND there are many instances in history
 in civil as well as military cases, where
 parents have put their own children to
 death, with more than ordinary rigor
 for violating the laws enacted for the pub-
 lick good; and would have condemned
 as the greatest weakness in the world, to
 have listened to their natural affection to the
 prejudice thereof. — I know not whether
 after this, I should speak of others, or
 stronger instances of patriotism, who have
 sacrificed themselves for its sake.

BUT then these instances have been ge-
 nerally confined to the narrow limits of
 their own country; in whose favour they
 have not scrupled to exercise any cruelties
 and barbarities against those of other na-
 tions and other climates, whom they thought
 it their greatest glory utterly to ruin and
 extinguish. Which was so far from being
 the heroic virtue, some affect to represent
 it, that it was a very sordid, low, and
 selfish spirit; too near a-kin to the grand
 enemy

enemy of mankind, who is represented going about seeking whom he may devour: And was much worse than even that narrow contracted temper for which the Jews were so much the subject of ridicule among their satirists, as well as the aversion of the heathens in general.

THE Jews indeed had a very good reason for their strong attachment to their own tribes and families; and that was, that they were separated by a divine command, in order that every one of them might know where to look for, and expect the Messiah. For this reason likewise, that partiality of primogeniture was not only very rational, but absolutely necessary among them; without which their tribes and families could not be preserved. And that is the reason, why Esau's selling his birth-right is represented as so profane and wicked a thing. But the other nations of the world had no such reason; nor indeed any other but civil convenience, in order to determine where the good offices we owe to mankind (since we are very much limited in our powers) should be directed. And that is the reason why I have already said, that civil relation is much stronger

M. 2 than

SIN AND MORE. than moral; which however, in dispo-
 VII. tion, and when we have capacity, ought
 to be universally extended to all the crea-
 tures of God.

AND so we find, that immediately on
 the appearance of the Messiah, the wall of
 partition was broken down, their families
 blended, and themselves universally dis-
 persed over the face of the whole earth.
 And there is but one single passage in the
New Testament, that looks like confining
 its benevolence in any manner whatsoever.
 "As we have therefore opportunity, let
 us do good unto all men, especially unto
 those that are of the household of faith."
 Yet even there, we see the precept is made
 universal; "as we have opportunity,
 to all men." And the partiality to those
 who were of the household of faith, was
 at that time, when they were distressed,
 and persecuted, and evil-intreated by all
 about them, a rule of great propriety and
 prudence; it being at all times a necessary
 requisite of true charity, to select for it the
 most worthy objects: In the same manner
 as our Saviour tells us in the text, that
 those whom he regarded as his mother,
 and

On the true nature of relationship.

165

and sister, and brother, were they "that SERN-
" did the will of his Father which is in VII.
" heaven." Which certainly is a very
laudable partiality, consistent with the sense
of all mankind; for as the apostle observes,
" scarcely for a righteous man will one die,
" yet peradventure for a good man some
" would even dare to die."

OTHERWISE we find the apostles not
only arguing against the narrowness of the
Jews, who were prejudiced against chris-
tianity because the blessings of it were ex-
tended to the *Gentiles* as well as to them;
telling them, " that so had the Lord com-
" manded them, saying, I have set thee
" to be a light to the *Gentiles*:" But
also, establishing the true knowledge, and
worship of God, on the most generous as
well as most noble principle ever advanced,
that " he had made of one blood, all na-
" tions of men, for to dwell on all the face
" of the earth." — This is the true ground
of that universal relationship I am discour-
sing of; and which it is necessary for all
christians to be well instructed in, and to
promote which the more limited ones are
merely subservient. As in a watch; the

M 3

in-

^a Rom. v. 7.

^b Luke ii. 2, 32.

^c Acts xvii. 26,

SERMON. influence any two or more which have an
 VII. each other, is not only to keep them in
 motion, but for the sake of the general
 movement of the whole machine.

THERE is nothing more exposed in
 scripture, nor in the conclusion was more
 severely punished, than the churlish answer
 of *Nabal* to *David's* messengers, which
 yet he himself doubtless thought extremely
 cautious and prudent, "There be many
 "servants, says he, now a days, that break
 "away, every man from his master: Shall
 "I then take my bread, and my wine,
 "and my flesh that I have killed for my
 "shearers, and give it unto men, whom
 "I know not whence they be?" What
 a different spirit, and from what an exalted
 sentiment is that of the apostle, "Be not
 "forgetful to entertain strangers, for
 "thereby some have entertained angels
 "unawares!"^b

WE have seen that nature provides for
 the care, and education of children, in
 the affection it has given parents towards
 them; so has it likewise taken care of the
 general benevolence, by the universal com-
 passion it has implanted in our breasts to-
 wards

^a 1 Sam. xxv. 10.

^b Heb. xiii. 2.

On the true nature of relationship. 167

wards all men. Which it is a very mistaken and wicked prudence to endeavour to check, in ourselves, or others. There is no doubt, but a man is in the first place to take care of himself, "and those of his own house." But in favour of those of our own house, to shut up our bowels of compassion against the rest of the world, or to scrape together what many must starve for want of, merely to satisfy their pride and ambition, and other vices, which a wise parent would endeavour in the whole course of education to restrain and mortify, is not only a great mistake of natural affection in ourselves; but is really corrupting them, and teaching them a selfish disposition, absolutely inconsistent with, and destructive of the whole spirit of christianity.

ONE would think the most natural consequence of our own necessities, and the necessities of those we are most nearly concerned for, should be a general commiseration of the wants and necessities of all men; and there cannot be a stronger instance of the perversion of human nature, than that men who are themselves necessitous, should

M 4

thus

SERM. shut up their bowels of compassion for

VII. any brother who has need; "for which had

"this world's good," saith St. John, "and

"seeth his brother have need, and shutteth

"his bowels of compassion from him, he

"dwelleth the love of God in him?" On

the contrary; for our own family's sake, we

should endeavour to promote this universal

benevolence, that they might become our

friends, the relations, the children of the

publick. A disposition that would put

every man out of all fear of want, or ne-

cessity, or ruin!

AND if we are not to confine our good

offices merely to our own families, we

ought by no means to allow any one thing

in, to hinder us from those good offices

which we owe to the rest of mankind, to

our neighbour, our country, or the whole

human species.

AMONG those who made excuses in the

gospel for not coming to the wedding-

supper, there was one that pleaded, he was

newly entered into a relation which God

himself had ordained even in paradise,

the most engaging of all others, and which

had innumerable duties attending it: And

yet,

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yet, for that excuse he was judged unworthy to taste of the supper.

THERE is no consideration whatever that should obstruct us in our duty; nor is religion of so confused a nature, that one part of it is inconsistent with another. It is all plain and simple, most admirably connected, and each particular part thereof subservient to the whole. And our Saviour takes occasion to show this from natural relation, because men are so apt to be deceived thereby, thinking it a sufficient answer to any one else that may want their service, You are no relation, you are no friend, no acquaintance; whereas it is the indispensable duty of christians, to consider all men as the children of God, and to love them as brethren; which he has set us an example of, by the most benevolent, the most generous maxim that ever proceeded out of the mouth of any legislator, "Who-
" soever doth the will of my Father which
" is in heaven, the same is my mother,
" and sister, and brother!"

NAV, so excellent is the spirit of christianity, that its good offices are not to be confined, even to those who "do the will
" of our Father which is in heaven;" we
are

§. 1. We are obliged thereby in some sense to love
 the worst of men, those who are hostile
 to their fellow-creatures, that curse them,
 that despightfully use them, and persecute
 them; and this, upon the same god-like
 principle, of being "perfect even as our
 Father which is in heaven is perfect, who
 causeth his sun to rise on the evil and on
 the good, and sendeth rain on the just
 and the unjust." *Matt. v. 45.*

It is in vain to substitute positive duty,
 zeal, or any outward form of religion in
 the room of this universal virtue. It is but
 deceiving ourselves; for "he only that
 doth this righteousness, is righteous, even
 as God is righteous."

Matt. v. 45, 46.

§. 2. It is not sufficient to be good, but to be
 good as God is good. The righteousness of
 God is not a mere quality, but a principle
 of action. It is the love of God, and of
 his will, which is the foundation of all
 his righteousness. It is the love of God,
 which is the source of all his goodness.
 It is the love of God, which is the
 foundation of all his righteousness.

SERMON VIII.

On the improvement of our talents.

MATT. XXV. 21.

His Lord said unto him, Well done thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

TH E S E words are part of a very S E R M. instructive parable, wherein our V I I I. Saviour sets the whole design of life, and all the advantages we enjoy in it, in a light, whereby every man may know both what he has to do, and what he has to expect. The advantages we enjoy, of whatever kind they are, whether we receive them from the providence, or from the grace of God, are represented as *talents*, or sums of money, put into our hands for us to improve, and make the most of that
we

SERM. we can. Improvement and success are

VIII. naturally the offspring of industry and application; and therefore according to what men have improved their talents, they have been diligent and industrious in the employment of them, they are rewarded as rewardable with greater, or less, promotions. But those who have been slothful and negligent, and have made no proportional improvement of what was intrusted with them, are supposed to be thrown into a dungeon of outer darkness, where is the "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

THIS is the purport of the parable of the certain "rich man" is said to have been "called into a far country," and to have "left his goods with his servants; " one five talents, with another two, and with another one." He that had received five talents, went and made them other five talents, and "made them other five talents;" and at his Lord's return was advanced to be "ruler over five cities." He likewise that had "received two talents," gained other two, and was promoted to be "ruler over two cities." But he that "had received one talent,"

went and hid it in the earth; and at his Lord's return gave it back to him, without the least accession or increase; and instead of being advanced, like the other two, is degraded and put into prison.

And it being the manner in scripture to describe the rewards of the virtuous and good in the future life, by such sensible representations; the lesson we are to learn from this parable is, to employ the talents God has put into our hands to the best advantage of virtue, and the promoting of his honour and glory.

And the more extensively virtuous and useful we can be, the better we shall answer this end.

Now the talents God has given to mankind are different, according to their different genius and situation in the world; and this is taken notice of in the parable; where "the man travelling into a far country," is said to give to one of his servants "five talents, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his several ability;" or as it might be rendered, according to their proper powers, or capacities: And there-

SERMON fore their improvement must be according

VIII. In discoursing on this subject, I shall

I. **MAKE** a few general observations on the improvement we are to make of the talents God has given us; and specify some of the most conspicuous. And,

II. **SHOW** the wisdom, and love of it. From which I shall show,

III. **THE** true state and condition of this world.

I. **I SHALL** make a few general observations on the improvement we are to make of the talents God has given us, and specify some of the most conspicuous.

We are not to satisfy ourselves then with making a little, but we must make all the improvement that we can; the same arguments that will conclude for the one, concluding likewise for the other: As a servant left intrusted with his master's affairs, we are represented to be in the parable would justly incur his displeasure if he did not make the current profit of his goods notwithstanding he might make some little advantage of them. But as men in traffic and merchandize make use of all the op-

of our talents.

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opportunities they can of advancing their substance, have an eye upon every prospect of gain, and lay up in store against a time of profit and advantage; so must we do in the important affairs of another world, in which there can be no possible degree of covetousness, no intemperate desire after more, nor time when we may retire and enjoy the fruit of our labours. This we can never do in the present life, but must continue growing in grace to the very last day of it; and, as St. Luke has the parable, "to occupy till our Lord and Master come," to call us to an account.

AND of this we can make no manner of doubt, if we will only take time to consider that the talents God has put into our hands are not our own, but His: And a person of faithfulness and integrity will make more conscience of managing what is intrusted with him by another, than that which is his own; because he has a right over his own, to do with it as he pleases, but has no right over that which is another man's, to do otherwise than according to direction.

MORE

Luke xix. 13.

SERM. **MOREOVER**, this fidelity in the improvement of our talents must be shown in the smallest, as well as in the greater and more important; for, as our Saviour observes, "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much;" for the same principle that will suffer a man to be unjust at all will be unlimited. Nor are we even to flatter ourselves that we shall go unpunished, because we do no hurt in life; we are to do all the positive good that we can. The servant who had received one talent was very careful not to lose it, or squander it away; was guilty of no riot or extravagance, but hides it cautiously in the earth, as near as he could contrive, out of the reach of thieves and accidents, and gave it back, safe and undiminished, to his Master; and yet for want of improvement is thrown into outer darkness.

AND if this is the case of those to whom the smallest and fewest talents are committed; what shall we think of those who make no good use or a bad one, of a greater number of the more noble, and improveable ones?

1. How

* Luke xix. 10.

of our talents.

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1. How many are there that enjoy extraordinary advantages of knowledge, for instance? Whose parts and abilities are great, and their friends able to give them an education; and to whom, by a greater aptitude to learn, it becomes easy and familiar? Who find out new tracts of knowledge that were never beaten before; or make improvements and new discoveries, in those that were but imperfectly or obscurely known? From these it will certainly be expected that they should employ their powers to the honour of God, and the service and convenience of mankind; and not wantonly indulge to mere speculation, or the idle amusements of a cloistered life. Those who search more minutely into the works of nature will naturally be required to ascribe greater glory to God; as they have stronger convictions of the existence and providence of God; there being nothing in nature but what furnishes demonstration thereof. The heavens, the earth, the structure of our own bodies, all acknowledge them, and exhort to the worship of him, proportionably to the increase of wonders they discover. It is either ignorance, or the most superficial observation,

SEAM. tion, or great perverseness of heart, that
 VIII. makes men atheists or profane. The
 prince of philosophers among us, in his
 endeavours to explain the operations of na-
 ture, resolves his first principle, namely
gravitation, with piety equal to his philo-
 sophy, wholly into the will, and constant
 providence of the Creator. How can these
 men sufficiently admire his wisdom, and
 adore his contrivance? And how excu-
 sable are they, if every thing they see
 does not tend to lift up their hearts in
 praises, and acknowledgments of him, who
 "created the heavens, and stretched them
 "out, that spread forth the earth, and
 "that which cometh out of it, that giveth
 "breath unto the people upon it, and
 "spirit to them that walk therein!"

EQUALLY, or more, criminal are they
 whose studies are bent to the examining
 and searching into the springs, and foun-
 dations of moral knowledge, if they do
 not faithfully employ it in the cultivating
 the principles of it in the hearts both of
 themselves and of mankind, to the honour
 of God. And, were it not that we see it
 fact among ourselves, and have accounts of
 history

history of many, whose writings have been highly esteemed and valued, and been of infinite service in forming the principles of others, but whose lives and conversation have been quite the reverse of every thing they taught; one would not imagine there could be such a contrariety in principle and practice. Exactly the reverse of the christian writer, *Non magna loquimur, sed vivimus*, we do not so much recommend virtue by our eloquence, as by our lives. But such knowledge will be the highest aggravation of their not practising agreeably to it. As in the gospel, "That servant which knew his LORD's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: And to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

In short, knowledge of all kinds has a natural tendency to promote virtue and religion. Knowledge of the world, and of

N 2 his-

* Luke xii. 47, 48.

SERM.

VIII.

history, gives great opportunity, by observing the different tempers, and inclinations, and conduct of mankind, with their several issues, to avoid the errors into which we are apt to be hurried. For the history of the world contains little more than a scene of misery and unhappiness, arising from false conduct and irregular pursuits. Which would lead a wise man to shun those false rocks upon which so many have silted; to conduct himself better; and to pursue more rational pleasures.—It should likewise lead those who see so much of the different sentiments and opinions of wise, and good men, to great moderation and brotherly affection. And it should lead those who see so much of the care and providence of God over the world, to the highest love and veneration of him. In short, there are so many inestimable advantages of knowledge, if men would but make use of them, that it is infinitely surprising to see how wretchedly it is perverted, and how many “are wise only to do evil, but “to do good have no knowledge.”

2. ANOTHER of the great and important talents which God puts into the hands of some, and whereby, if they are faithful,

they

they are capable of great service to him their Master, is, what some would chuse to call, the gifts of nature. That their genius turns them to any particular useful way of serving mankind; by either first finding out something beneficial to society, or by making farther improvements, or bringing to perfection what was found out before, or making such discoveries as may be beneficial to those that come after them: And the improvement of these will be required at their hands. Were men to be slothful and indolent in these respects, how many things would never have been discovered; or would be quite lost after a discovery; or never be revived, after they had been lost for some ages? We may judge of the wickedness of this, by the benefits we enjoy at this day from the arts and industry of our ancestors; the several implements they have invented in husbandry, agriculture, geometry, astronomy, navigation, architecture, medicine, surgery, and the like; together with the more modern inventions of telescopes and all kinds of optical glasses, which give us such a distinct and noble insight into the works of God; raising in us the most sublime ideas,

SERM. and carrying us to the utmost height of rational pleasure. And what indignation would it have given us at the invention and improvers of these arts, if they had buried them in oblivion, uncommunicated to mankind? Or what detestation must we have conceived against such persons, if they had employed their parts and abilities, to corrupt and debauch, and vitiate others? Nay, if they had meanly applied them only to the purposes of their own covetousness and ambition?

3. ON others God, in his good providence, has bestowed great riches, and possessions of this world; and these are represented in scripture as stewards intrusted with them only for their Master's service, out of which they are allowed merely a competency for their own support, but are accountable for all the rest. And he will certainly deal very severely with those that have "embezzled their Lord's goods;" wasting them in indulging to their vicious and luxurious appetites; not laying them out in good works, and charitable offices towards their fellow-creatures: Which they must do in proportion to what God has bestowed upon them; the only rule that can

can be laid down for charity.—Accordingly S s 24.
 it was the rule our Saviour judged by in VIII.
 the gospel, when “ he beheld how the
 “ people cast money into the treasury ; ”
 for though “ many that were rich cast in
 “ much,” yet upon seeing “ a certain poor
 “ widow throw in two mites,” which
 make but a farthing, “ he calleth unto
 “ him his disciples, and saith unto them,
 “ Verily I say unto you, that this poor
 “ widow hath cast more in, than all they
 “ which have cast into the treasury. For
 “ all they did cast in of their abundance ;
 “ But she of her want did cast in all that
 “ she had, even all her living.” There
 is not a severer woe any where denounced
 in the scripture, than that against rich men
 who have mis-improved, or abused their
 wealth, contrary to the purposes for which
 it was bestowed upon them, “ Go to now
 “ ye rich men, weep and howl for your
 “ miseries that shall come upon you. Your
 “ riches are corrupted, and your garments
 “ are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver
 “ is cankered, and the rust of them shall
 “ be a witness against you, and shall eat
 “ your flesh, as it were fire : Ye have
 N 4 “ heaped

SERM.

VIII.

“ heaped treasure together for the last days.
 “ Behold, the hire of the labourers, which
 “ have reaped down your fields, which
 “ of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and
 “ the cries of them which have reaped
 “ are entered into the ears of the Lord of
 “ Sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure upon
 “ the earth, and been wanton: Ye have
 “ nourished your hearts, as in a day of
 “ slaughter.” And whoever has incurred
 this woe, will not find it practicable to buy
 it off by the most lavish bequests of charity
 on a death-bed; for their riches are not
 their own, but God’s, and they had much
 better “ have put them to the exchange,
 “ that at his coming he might have re-
 “ ceived his own with usury.”

4. THERE is another talent providence
 puts into the hands of some few persons
 in the management of which great care
 and improvement are required, and that
 is power and authority: And the manner
 of rewarding the good and faithful in the
 parable, with making them “ rulers over
 “ many things,” does very naturally and ob-
 viously point this out to us. There cannot
 be a more vain and idle thought enter into the

the heart of man, than that power is put
 into any one's hands for their own sake; or
 that providence has the least view to the
 gratification of their pride therein. The
 design of magistracy is merely the service
 and benefit of the people; and power car-
 ried to a greater height, is absolutely incon-
 sistent with the whole nature and genius of
 the christian religion. When the ten dis-
 ciples "were moved with indignation a-
 gainst the two brethren," the children of
Zebedee, upon their mother's desiring that
 "they might sit, the one on the right
 hand, and the other on the left" of our
 Saviour "in his kingdom;" He explains
 to them the true nature of ambition, and
 power, and precedency, in the following
 manner, "But *Jesus* called them unto
 him, and said, Ye know that the princes
 of the *Gentiles* exercise dominion over
 them, and they that are great, exercise
 authority upon them. But it shall not
 be so among you: But whosoever will
 be great among you, let him be your
 minister; and whosoever will be chief
 among you, let him be your servant.
 Even as the Son of man came, not to be
 ministered unto, but to minister, and to
 give

SERM. "give his life a ransom for many;" the
 VIII. is to say, under my dispensation, ye
 princes, and magistrates, and great men,
 after my example, approve their supe-
 riority by the important services they do to
 mankind. And whoever have abused their
 power to fill their own coffers, and to
 exert a vain superiority, and "shall begin
 " to smite their fellow-servants, and to eat
 " and drink with the drunken: The Lord
 " of those servants shall come in a day
 " when they look not for him; and in an
 " hour that they are not aware of; and
 " shall cut them asunder, and appoint
 " them their portion with the hypocrites.
 " There shall be weeping and gnashing of
 " teeth.^b"

5. THE talents I have already men-
 tioned, *viz.* knowledge, parts, riches, and
 power, are bestowed only upon some;
 but what I am about to mention, is, by
 the goodness of God to us in this country,
 universally bestowed upon all men, namely
 the revelation of his grace. And this is in
 truth the most important one of all. For
 though natural knowledge be a very great
 advantage, and the law of nature, rightly
 under-

^a Matt. xx. 25, &c.

^b Matt. xxiv. 49, &c.

understood, will teach men the principal duties of religion, yet when we consider the great difficulties men have found in the search after truth, and the very imperfect notions they have had of it at best, we shall see how much happier it is for us, not to be left to make these discoveries ourselves, but to have a revelation so plain that they who run may read it: Wherein our duty is laid before us in such an easy light that no one can be ignorant of it, but by the false glosses of men of ignorant or vicious minds. And not only the principles of truth, and the rules of our behaviour are so plainly mentioned, but the helps it promises are so very great, that a man must be very blind to his own interest that will not conform thereto. An advantage we enjoy beyond many other nations of the earth; nay, beyond many who profess themselves of the same religion, and to be disciples of the same Master. For, we have his religion genuine and uncorrupted; while others, and much the greatest part of *Christendom*, have so disguised it, obliterating many of its most important doctrines, sullyng, nay very often eradicating, its purest precepts, and mixing so many senseless, absurd and incon-

SERMON sistent inventions with it, destroying
 VIII. very intent and purpose, that it is very
 great indulgence to allow them to pass by
 the name of Christ.

AND this is an advantage of such high
 importance, that though St. *Matthew* has
 given us the parable in the general sense
 which I have considered it, of ALL the
 talents we enjoy, and has added it as a
 reason of that precept our Saviour had
 before laid down, "Watch therefore,"
 "for ye know not the day nor the hour"
 "wherein the Son of man cometh," yet
 our translators seem inclined to confine
 to this of the gospel, by adding to it
 "The kingdom of heaven" is as a man
 travelling to a far country. But the truth
 is, the sum and substance, the whole
 religion consists in a faithful improvement
 of all our talents.

AND this representation of the good
 things we enjoy, as put into our hands
 by a Master for his use and service,
 that is to say, to be subservient to the
 scheme of providence his infinite wisdom
 has dictated, if rightly attended to, would
 make men extreamly cautious how in any
 case whatsoever they made their own will

and pleasure a law to them. For alas! we have not any one thing that we can call SERM. VIII.

our own: But "are bought with a price," and are therefore to glorify God in our "bodies and our spirits which are God's."

And though it is a very just question which he is represented to ask in the gospel, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" and he is, as the apostle speaks, as "a potter that hath power over his clay to make one vessel to honour and another to dishonour;" yet no mortal man, whether he be in dishonour, or in honour, is any thing better than the mere clay of that potter; and it is not lawful for him to do any thing but for the improvement of his Master's money. And this is strongly pointed out to us in the Master's answer to the unprofitable servant, "Thou oughtest therefore to have put MY money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury."

AND this relation which we stand in to the supreme Being, is by no means a mortifying, but a very pleasing consideration.

For

1 Cor. vi. 20. Matt. xx. 15. Rom. ix. 21.

SERMON. For it appears by the text that we serve a very generous beneficent Master, who will bestow upon us a very rich reward for our labour, "His Lord said unto him, Well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

II. THE wisdom and benefit of self-improvement will appear, if we would consider the contrast between two persons, one advanced to be a ruler over cities, full of joy and delight, delivered from all anxiety about his future situation, and enjoying such a state of ease the more, because he had formerly known what care, trouble, and anxiety were, and assured that he can never fall from the state of grandeur and magnificence he is in: And of another that heretofore had the same views and hopes, if he would but have taken the pains which the prospect of rule and government would have very much softened and alleviated, if not made pleasant and delightful; but chusing rather sloth and

inglorious

inglorious ease, and to spend his time in SERMON
frolick and merriment; in which condition VIII
he is found by his Master, called to ac-
count, has nothing to say for himself, but
audaciously to arraign his Master's justice, and
stand obstinate and stubborn; for which
he is immediately deprived of every thing
he enjoyed, and thrown into a prison to
remain for life, and to know no comfort,
no not even of the light of day: If, I say,
we would consider such a happy, and such
a forlorn condition, and compare them to-
gether; we shall soon see, whether it be not
worth while to be faithful over a few ta-
lents, that so we may be made rulers over
many things, and admitted into the joy of
our Lord: Or, whether it is better to
hide our talents in the earth, and to lead
lazy and indolent lives, and in a little time
to be cast into outer darkness, where is
weeping and gnashing of teeth." The
intent of which sensible representations, is,
to teach us, that the good and faithful ser-
vants of God, as they have been described,
shall be rewarded with eternal life in hea-
ven; but that the wicked shall be punished
with "everlasting destruction from the
pre-

SERMON. "presence of the Lord, and from the
 VIII. "glory of his power."^a

III. FROM what has been said, we see what the true state and condition of the world is, namely, a state of trial and probation for another, and in what manner that trial is made. The design of the creation of man is to raise him by degrees to perfection; and so we find the future life called "the general assembly and church" "of the first-born which are written in the book of life," "where are God the judge of all," "and the spirits of just men made perfect;"^b and the nature of that perfection is described, by "being perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect."^c Now we see, by the talents which have been mentioned, *how* we may become so. Being perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect, is elsewhere called "being merciful,"^d which implies the highest degree of goodness, "even as he is merciful." And it is, that we may become so, that God has given to any of us knowledge, parts, riches and power, every

^a 2 Thes. i. 9.

^b Heb. xii. 23.

^c Matt. v. 48.

^d Luke vi. 36.



every one of which must be, and we have seen as we have gone along how they may be, improved, applied, and communicated, in acts of goodness to our fellow-creatures. He that communicates his knowledge, or any advantage of his knowledge to others, resembles the wisdom of God; he that communicates his riches resembles the loving-kindness and providence of God; and he that employs his power to defend the innocent, relieve the oppressed, and adjust the differences between others, resembles him as the Sovereign, the Governor, and Judge of the world. And all the precepts of the gospel are of such a kind as tend to answer that very purpose; in so much that St. Peter calls it "the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature." It would be unworthy the impartiality of God towards his creatures, to give to one riches while he left another poor, if it was not that the rich man might communicate of his riches to his neighbour; and so of the rest.

O

Nay,

SERM. Nay, even poverty and other afflictions

VIII.

help to carry on the same end, as the poor man is thereby indubed to communicate his labour and service to the rich, without which the rich man would not be able with all his riches, so much as to support himself. Nay, there is no man, till he is worn out by age and infirmity, but he something or other to communicate for the good of others; and even then, he is the instrument of good to others by the opportunity it gives them of imitating the mercy of "their Father which is in heaven" towards him. So that every man may say, and the whole business of his life is in this situation, to subserve the scheme of providence God has laid down, and the system of virtue he has established, of which the end is not yet, but it is to be completed and perfected in the future life.

• AND when this is called a state of trial, it is not to be understood as if God were to try us so, as if he could not otherwise know whether we were fit for future happiness or not: But it is called so with relation only to ourselves and to the day of judgment; when the justice of our sentence will be manifested before all the holy angels,

and

and the universal assembly of all men that SERM.
ever had talents to occupy upon the face VIII.
of this earth; as we shall be approved or
condemned, according as we have improved
them, or hid them in the earth, or abused
them.

LET us all then seriously consider the
state of our condition, and let those
who are faithfully improving their talents,
whatever they be, look forwards with joy
and pleasure to the reward, which will so
infinitely exceed their fidelity: For though
it is only "a few things" we can be
faithful in, we are to be made rulers over
many things"—And let those who hi-
therto have hid their talents, or abused
them, be very thankful to God, that the
time of their trial is not yet over, but there
is yet space for repentance. And let them
use their utmost diligence to redeem the time
they have hitherto wasted, and it will not
yet be too late; for God is represented in
scripture as "waiting to be gracious,"
and as never shutting his ears to the cries of
any sincere penitent. But if, when they
have space given them to repent, they will

SERM. not repent, but have their oil to buy,
 VIII. their lamps to trim, when the bridegroom
 is coming, those only who are the
 "ready" shall "go in with him to the
 "marriage, and the door will be shut,
 and those who come after, will by
 means be able to get admittance, but
 will "answer and say, Verily I say
 "you, I know you not." "Let us wait
 "therefore, for we know neither the day
 "nor the hour, wherein the son of man
 "cometh."

* Matt. xxv. 12, 13.

SERMON IX.

NABAL, or the folly and wickedness of a churlish disposition.

SAM. xxv. part of the 25th verse.

—For as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him.

IN this history of *Nabal*, there is exposed in very strong and lively colours, the character of a *Churl*: Which, though it may appear, at first, to be rather a foible, than a vicious character; yet, from the observations made in this chapter, and particularly the words of the text, we shall see it has as much wickedness as folly in it.—For what sort of a *Fool*, the word *Nabal* in *Hebrew* signifies, will appear from the passages of scripture where it is used. It is used in a song of *Moses*, in this manner. “ They have corrupted themselves; their spot is not the spot

SERM.
IX.

SERM. " of his children. Do ye thus requite the

IX. " Lord, O *foolish* people and unwise?"

Job applies it to his wife, when she gave him that sad council, " Dost thou still re-

" tain thine integrity? Curse God and

" die." But he said unto her, " Thou

" speakest as one of the *foolish* women

" speaketh: What! shall we receive good

" at the hand of God, and shall we not

" receive evil?"^b—And again, when *De-*

" *nah* the daughter of *Leab*, which she

" bare unto *Jacob*, went out to see the

" daughters of the land; and *Shechem* the

" son of *Hamor* the *Hivite*, Prince of the

" country, saw her, and took her, and

" lay with her, and defiled her: The sons

" of *Jacob* came out of the field, when

" they heard it; and the men were grie-

" ed, and they were very wroth, because

" he had wrought *folly* in *Israel*, in lying

" with *Jacob's* daughter, which thing ought

" not to be done."^c

FROM these passages, in all which the words in the original come from the same root, we see, the *folly* mentioned in the text, does not mean idiotism, or natural

^a *Deut.* xxxii. 5, 6.

xxxiv. 7.

^b *Job* ii. 9, 10.

^c *Gen.*

want of understanding; but a disposition SERM.
IX.
to wickedness and mischief.

I SHALL therefore make such observations on the history of *Nabal*, as will show, that he not only acted a contemptible and foolish, but also a vitious, and immoral, part; and make such other observations, as may tend to cultivate a contrary disposition in us.

His character, I have said, is that of a *Churl*. Not that it appears he wanted generosity, on some occasions, or in some degree; for he could hold a feast in his house (as the history tells us) "like the feast of a King:" But his character seems to be that of saying and doing what he did, in the most coarse and brutal manner he could contrive. He was one of that sort of men which choose to disoblige, and valued not what degree of pain he gave in his manner of doing it. He seems to think he had nothing to do in the world, but to take care of himself; that what he had was his own, and nobody had any thing to do to meddle or make with him. He thought himself as much wiser and better than his neighbours, as he was richer;

O. 4 and

כָּלִי Stultitia cum scelere conjuncta.

Castel. Lexic. heptaglot.

SERMON, and that poverty and misfortunes were sure signs of vice and the hatred of God. He valued not what risque he run; he took a malicious pleasure in saying a rude thing, and at all hazards must utter it: But when he had brought himself into any mischief by it, he was cowardly almost beyond contempt. For when his wife had told him the destruction *David* had resolved against him; notwithstanding *David* was pacified, yet "his heart died within him, and he became as a stone." "And it came to pass about ten days after, that the Lord smote *Nabal* that he died." And the history seems to insinuate, that it was by this very fright: And so *Nabal* died, as he lived, "even as a fool dieth."

Now though there is something extremely contemptible, and ridiculous, in this character; yet as the contempt and ridicule arise from the disapprobation the mind feels at his behaviour, it shows it to be vitious too. And as we meet with people of the same make in common life every day, the wickedness of it cannot be sufficiently exposed, as such a heart must be odious in the sight of God, and certainly is very mischievous in life.

of a churlish disposition.

To judge how such a heart must appear in the sight of God, we must enquire what principles it seems to act upon. And if it be true, that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," one can scarce imagine a man to have a worse heart than *Nabal*. One of his own servants gives him this general character, "He is such a son of *Belial* that a man cannot speak to him." And this could be owing to nothing but a selfish, unsociable disposition.

In discoursing on this subject, I shall,

I. SHOW the folly and wickedness of such a disposition, as it is contrary to the nature of man—as it breaks in upon the order of providence—and, as it is inconsistent with those virtues, by which we are to be trained up for the happiness of the future state. And,

II. THE better to expose its deformity, place by it the opposite character, which I shall recommend to our imitation.

I. I

SERMON. I. I SHALL show the folly and wickedness of a churlish disposition.

IX.

IT is contrary to the nature of men, who is compounded of social, as well as selfish affections. And as he cannot possibly subsist without the assistance of others, is, for that reason, under obligations of assisting others in his turn. And these affections are not to be extended to them capriciously, as we please, but must be universal, and unbounded. But a *Churl* seems scarcely to have any affections of love and benevolence at all; or, if he has, they are not founded on fixed and settled principles, but excited, only by fits and starts, just as his arbitrary, capricious humour permits. And this is very evident in *Nabal's* whole behaviour to *David*, when he was obliged to hide himself in the wilderness of *Paran*, from the unreasonable anger and resentment of *Saul*, and where "he heard, that *Nabal* did shear his sheep:" Of which the history tells us he had no less than "three thousand, besides a thousand goats." Nothing could be more courteous and complaisant, than the message *David* sent him on the occasion, "And *David* sent out ten young men. And *David* said unto

" the

" the young men, Got ye up to *Carmel*,
 " and go to *Nabal*, and greet him in my
 " name. And thus shall ye say to him
 " that liveth in prosperity. Peace be both
 " to thee, and peace be to thy house, and
 " peace be unto all that thou hast. And
 " now I have heard that thou hast shear-
 " ers: Now thy shepherds which were
 " with us, we hurt them not, neither was
 " there ought missing unto them all the
 " while they were in *Carmel*. Ask thy
 " young men, and they will show thee.
 " Wherefore let the young men find fa-
 " vour in thine eyes (for we come in a
 " good day) give I pray thee whatsoever
 " cometh to thine hand, unto thy servants,
 " and to thy son *David*."

HAD *David* been so disposed, he could
 have taken what he pleased from him by
 violence and force; and it would have been
 thought excusable enough in a man re-
 duced to the condition of a vagabond and
 an out-law. But you see the gentle, and
 civil manner in which he sent to greet him;
 the good wishes he expresses for his wel-
 fare; and though he gently touches on the
 kindness he and his followers had shown to
Nabal's shepherds in the wilderness, he
 does

Does not put it in near so strong terms, as *Nabal's* own servants do, for they tell *Abigail*, that "the man had been very good unto them;" that, "they were a wall unto them both by night and by day, all the while they were with them keeping the sheep." And his request is very modest, "Give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thy hand:" And his addressing to him as a Father, calling himself his "son *David*," was the highest compliment the boldest eastern language afforded.

One would think so soft and decent a message deserved a return with something of civility and good-manners: But let us hear what it was. "And *Nabal* answered *David's* servants, and said, Who is *David*? And who is the son of *Jesse*? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my hearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be? Can any thing be conceived more surly and brutal, as well as a more infamous falsehood? For it is plain he did know who *David* was,

of a churlish disposition.

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by his mentioning his father's name, as well as his own: And it is very probable, he knew, that on the death of *Saul*, he was to be King of *Israel*: For it is plain his wife *Abigail* had heard of "the good," as she expresses it, "that the Lord had spoken concerning him, and that he "would appoint him ruler over *Israel*." And yet the obvious thought, that would have come into most mens minds, of making court to him on the occasion, was quite over-ruled, and lost in his shyness. But the time was not yet come: He was now poor and a vagabond; and that was subject enough of insult to so base a heart. Had he lived to see the time, there is no doubt, but he would have been among his foremost sycophants, and the first to offer him the shameful incense of flattery, and present his slavish neck to the foot of this servant, who, perhaps, had broke away from his master. But so it happens with most vicious persons; by their cunning, and false prudence, they defeat their own purposes: And a man who has no regard to society, seldom preserves a true and just regard for himself.

THE rule of judging of the fitness, or impropriety of dispositions or actions, is,

to

SERMON. to consider what would be the consequence
 IX. to society, if every one was to indulge, and
 practise the same. It is not enough that a
 man has *happened* to do no hurt; the judg-
 ment must be formed from the natural
 consequence. Now let us see what that
 would be, in a society composed all of
 members thus churlish to one another.—I
 have already said such persons seem to have
 no principle at all, and therefore there can
 be no possible dependence upon them. One
 cannot know, when the fancy took
 them, whether they would so much as
 clash with one another; and, if they
 did, it must be in a manner extremely dis-
 agreeable and uncomfortable, perpetually
 disobliging, and quarrelling, and discor-
 ding, and deserving, a mutual suspicion and
 distrust.—Among “such sons of Belial,”
 “that a man cannot speak to them” there
 must be one continued sullen silence, no
 communication of sentiments, no intelligence
 for their mutual benefit, no deference to
 each others opinion, nor desire to be in-
 structed, or advised.—Every man would
 do, what *Job* describes himself never to
 have done, “eat his morsel himself alone,”
 and

“and the fatherless never eat thereof.” SERMON
 In such a society, “the poor must be IX.
 “with-held from their desire, and the eyes
 “of the widow must fail;” many would
 “perish for want of clothing, and the poor
 “be without covering.” The *rich* could
 enjoy no comfort of riches in the right dis-
 posal of them; and though they might
 sometimes “hold a feast in their houses,
 “like the feast of a King,” it would be to
 no better purpose than, like *Nabal*, to “have
 “their heart merry within them, and
 “be very drunken.”

Who would be willing to enroll them-
 selves in such a society? Or, would the chur-
 lish *themselves*, chuse to converse with none,
 but persons of the same untoward disposi-
 tion? It must be one continued state of
 war, and every one of them would be more
 angry with the other, than persons of
 milder and sweeter tempers would be. If
David, so remarkably gentle and courteous,
 could conceive so strong a resentment a-
 gainst *Nabal*; what would another *Nabal*
 have done? Or what mischief must such
 persons bring upon themselves, in every
 company whatsoever?—When *Nabal* had
 given

^a Job xxxi. 17.

^b Ib. ver. 16.

^c Ib. ver. 19.

SEEM. given the rude answer to *David's* message

IX.

that we have heard, "*David's* young men
 " turned their way, and went again, and
 " came, and told him all these sayings.
 " And *David* said unto his men, Gird you
 " on every man his sword. And they
 " girded on every man his sword, and
 " *David* also girded on his sword: And
 " there went up after *David* about four
 " hundred men. Now *David* had said,
 " Surely in vain have I kept all that this
 " fellow hath in the wilderness, so that
 " nothing was missed of all that pertained
 " unto him, and he hath requited me evil
 " for good. So and more also do God up-
 " to the enemies of *David*, if I leave of
 " all that pertain to him by the morning
 " light, any that pissleth against the wall."

You see here, in *Nabal's* disposition,
 another crime of the most heinous nature,
 and what perhaps is seldom or never cured,
 and which ordinarily mixes with the same
 character in common life, and that is in-
 gratitude. He had rewarded *David* " evil
 " for good." But it was good, that per-
 haps he might say, he had neither asked
 nor desired; for that is generally another
 ingredient in such tempers, to hate to be

of a churlish disposition.

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beholden, and never to think themselves SERM.
obliged. Which, how bad it appeared to IX.

David, is evident from what we have seen: And it is plain, he was not a man of a very wrathful, passionate, and revengeful nature, from his sparing the life of *Saul* a very little before, who was pursuing him in the wilderness of *En-gedi*, and when the Lord had delivered him into his hand: Which had affected *Saul* so much, as to draw from him, who was of a very envious and inexorable temper himself, the following acknowledgment, "Thou art more
" righteous than I: For thou has reward-
" ed me good, whereas I have rewarded
" thee evil. And thou hast showed this
" day how that thou hast dealt well with
" me: Forasmuch as when the Lord had
" delivered me into thine hand, thou kil-
" ledst me not. For if a man find his
" enemy, will he let him go well away?
" Wherefore the Lord reward thee good
" for that thou hast done unto me this
" day."

2. AND not only is a churlish disposition, thus contrary to the nature of man, which is compounded of social as well as selfish

P

affec-

* 1 Sam. xxiv. 17, 18, 19.

SERM. affections; but it breaks in on the whole
 IX. order of providence, as it interrupts the
 commerce between man and man, and the
 good offices required from one to another, by
 which only the scheme of providence can
 be pursued. The scheme of providence is
 to support *the whole*, by the assistance of
 every part. It is in the natural, as the
 apostle represents it to be in the christian
 life, "We are all one body and members
 "one of another:" And "the body is
 "not one member but many."—And we
 may argue in the same manner as he does,
 "If the foot shall say, Because I am not
 "the hand, I am not of the body; is it
 "therefore not of the body? And if the ear
 "shall say, Because I am not the eye, I
 "am not of the body; is it therefore
 "not of the body? If the whole body
 "were an eye, where were the hear-
 "ing? If the whole were hearing, where
 "were the smelling? But now hath God
 "set the members, every one of them in
 "the body, as it hath pleased him. And
 "if they were all one member, where
 "were the body? But now are they many
 "members, yet but one body. And the
 "eye cannot say unto the hand, I have
 "no need of thee; nor again the head to
 "the

of a churlish disposition.

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the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, **SERMON**

much more, these members of the body **IX.**

which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. And those members of the body

which we think to be less honourable,

upon these we bestow more abundant

honour, and our uncomely parts have

more abundant comeliness. For our

comely parts have no need: But God

hath tempered the body together, having

given more abundant honour to that part

which lacketh, that there should be no

schism in the body; but that the mem-

bers should have the same care one for

another. And whether one member

suffer, all the members suffer with it:

Or one member be honoured, all the

members rejoice with it."

Which words give us a lively, sensi-

ble, and beautiful representation of the

state and condition of this world, and the

business every one of us has to do in it.

And, rightly considered, and thoroughly

understood, will give us a true judgment of

virtue and religion, very different from

what they are generally thought to be;

showing us the deformity and impropriety

of many things, which pass among man-

P 2

kind

SERM.

IX.

kind as matters of great indifference, but are really as enormous as injustice, or any other of these things that are ordinarily called vices: Namely, that this system of things, is like the body of a man, where no particular member has any separate interest, nor any private business of its own, but is made to subserve the good of the whole: Nor is any more or less useful, or essential to the perfection of body than the rest.

AND this representation will show us the propriety of many things, which else would not be easy to account for. When we consider every man's particular employment of life in itself, it may appear idle, and vain, and unworthy the appointment of infinite wisdom. For a man to spend his life in hewing of wood, or drawing of water, or measuring, or weighing, any other commodities, it seems but an idle insignificant employment for a reasonable creature. But, when we consider that the wood the one hews, is necessary for the fuel, and building, and shipping of many, and the water another draws, may, in many ways, save a multitude of lives, by administering to their thirst, the chearing of their hearts, their cleanliness, and health, and so of the

of a churlish disposition.

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the rest ; we shall see these actions in a very different light, as instances of industry, social communication, and of great virtue, as they are services to the other members of the body, without which they could not subsist.

S E R M.
IX.

AND this is the reason why christianity refines so much on the common systems of morals ; teaching us to love our enemies, to be courteous, to avoid censure, and slander, and the like ; because the contrary must necessarily interrupt this general harmony of the body. And therefore we find it ranks churlishness, and peevishness, and such sort of infirmities, among the number of vices—And this is very remarkable in that passage of our Saviour in his excellent sermon on the mount, in the several degrees he instances in of anger, “ Who-
“ soever is angry with his brother without
“ a cause, shall be in danger of the judg-
“ ment ; and whosoever shall say to his
“ brother “ *Raca*,” shall be in danger of
“ the council ; but whosoever shall say
“ *thou fool*,” shall be in danger of hell-
“ fire.”—The two expressions here in-
stanced in, “ *Raca* ” and “ *thou fool*,” are

P 3

mere

Mat. v. 22,

SERM. mere words of peevishness and churlishness.

IX. The one is a *Syriac* word, which some interpret to mean nothing more than scornful or slighting interjections, and others interpret to mean the *common* use of an expression, very justifiable, and which St. James uses, upon a *serious* occasion, "Thou vain man:"^b The other, *thou fool*, is something more reproachful and opprobrious, and therefore represented as more severely punishable. And they are both condemned, not as mere wanton expressions, but because they proceed from an angry, unkind, and unsociable temper, such as we are discouraging against.

3. AND if a churlish disposition be thus contrary to the nature of man, the order of providence, and is expressly forbidden by christianity; there seems to be little occasion to add any thing more, to show, that it is inconsistent with the virtues by which we are to be trained up for the happiness of the future state. For there is a necessary connection between right behaviour here, and our being received to that happiness; and an absolute impossibility of any one's

^a רָכַח In *Syriac* and *Hebrew* signifies *spittle*, and so *spit*, or *reach*.

^b James ii. 20.

of a churlish disposition.

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one's being made perfect therein, that is, **9 B R R.**
not prepared by having been put in a proper method for it here. And it will be found in virtue, as in all other things; no one will be thought a master in it, that is not thoroughly polished in the smaller, as well as the greater particulars of it, that has not corrected, to the best of his power, every thing that is unlovely, or of ill report; that has in him "a spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

IX.

II. AND how unlovely, of what ill report, how full of spots and wrinkles, and such things, a churlish disposition is, will farther appear from what I proposed in the second place; namely, a description of the opposite character, which I am to recommend.

AND as it has been the custom of the best writers of antiquity, to recommend virtue, or to reprove vice in real or fictitious personages; in imitation of their great example, I shall, by way of contrast, hold out to you, in order to expose the churlishness of *Nabal*, that which the sacred writer himself seems to point out to us of his

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wife

SERM. wife *Abigail*; who, he tells us, "was a

IX. "woman of good understanding, and of

"a beautiful countenance." And the instance he gives us of her understanding was exactly the reverse of her husband's folly; namely, her different behaviour in her own family, and the address by which she averted the consequences of *David's* resentment.

In her own family, she was not such a daughter of *Belial*, that a man could not speak to her, but her meanest servants had easy access to her, and seemed much attached to her interest, by the advice one of them gave her of the evil that was determined against their master, and against all his household. Which she had prudence enough to avert by a very rich present, and the most courteous manner of offering it; and thoroughly to soften *David*, by the delicate apology she makes for the treatment his servants met with in her house, at the same time.

I SHALL repeat it to you, and appeal to any person of the roughest manners, whether there is not something in it extremely amiable and engaging. "And when *Abigail* saw *David*, she hastened and lighted off

of a churlish disposition.

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" off the ass, and fell before *David* on her SEAM.

" face, and bowed herself to the ground, **IX.**

" and fell at his feet, and said; Upon me,

" my Lord, upon me let this iniquity be,

" and let thine handmaid, I pray thee,

" speak in thine audience, and hear the

" words of thine handmaid. Let not my

" Lord, I pray thee, regard this man of

" *Belial*, even *Nabal* : For as his name is,

" so is he ; *Nabal* is his name, and folly

" is with him : But I thine handmaid saw

" not the young men of my Lord whom

" thou didst send. Now therefore, my

" Lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy

" soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath with-

" holden thee from coming to shed blood,

" and from avenging thyself with thine

" own hand ; now let thine enemies, and

" they that seek evil to my Lord, be as

" *Nabal*. And now this blessing which

" thine handmaid hath brought unto my

" Lord, let it even be given to the young

" men that follow my Lord. I pray thee,

" forgive the trespass of thine handmaid :

" For the Lord will certainly make my

" Lord a sure house : Because my Lord

" fighteth the battles of the Lord, and

" evil hath not been found in thee all thy

" days,

SERM. " days. Yet a man is risen to pursue thee,
 IX. " and to seek thy soul: But the soul of
 " my Lord shall be bound in the bundle
 " of life with the Lord thy God; and the
 " souls of thine enemies, them shall he
 " sling out, as out of the middle of a sling.
 " And it shall come to pass, when the
 " Lord shall have done to my Lord, ac-
 " cording to all the good that he hath spo-
 " ken concerning thee, and shall have ap-
 " pointed thee ruler over *Israel*; that this
 " shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence
 " of heart unto my Lord, either that thou
 " hast shed blood causeless, or that my
 " Lord hath avenged himself: But when
 " the Lord shall have dealt well with
 " my Lord, then remember thine hand-
 " maid."

THERE is nothing more exquisite than the simplicity with which the stories of the *Old Testament* are related; and a man has little taste of beauty and elegance, that needs any paraphrase on what I have read. We shall form the best judgment of the propriety, and consequently the virtue (for virtue is nothing else but propriety) of it, from the effect it had on the man after God's own heart. " And *David* said unto

" *Abi-*

of a churlish disposition.

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Abigail, "Blessed be the Lord God of **SERMON**

"*Israel*, which sent thee this day to meet **IX.**

"me: And blessed be thy advice, and

"blessed be thou, which hast kept me this

"day from coming to shed blood, and

"from avenging myself with mine own

"hand. For in very deed, as the Lord

"God of *Israel* liveth, which hath kept

"me back from hurting thee, except thou

"hadst hastened, and come to meet me;

"surely there had not been left unto *Na-*

"*bal*, by the morning light, any that

"pisseth against the wall. So *David* re-

"ceived of her hand that which she had

"brought him, and said unto her, Go up

"in peace to thine house; see I have

"hearkened to thy voice, and have ac-

"cepted thy person."

THIS is the history of the churlish *Na-*
bal, and of the good understanding of his
wife *Abigail*; thus different were their
characters.

THAT what I have been treating of, is
a subject of real, substantial, necessary vir-
tue, will appear, from reflecting on the
great decency, propriety, and courtesy of
all the characters in the *Old* and *New*
Testa-

SEAM. Testament, that are recommended to our

IX. imitation.—It would be too tedious to mention them all; it will be sufficient, if we call to remembrance the whole behaviour of our blessed Lord and Saviour, either in his private life, to his parents, and relations, to the woman taken in adultery, and the woman of *Samaria*: Or, in his publick character, at his temptation, on his trial, and even on the cross itself: Or that of his followers; and particularly of *St. Paul*, on many occasions.—And, more especially, if we would imitate the example of the blest above, we shall find a remarkable instance of this very kind, in the dialogue between *Abraham* in heaven, and the rich man in torments. Nay, upon an occasion, where one would think any such thing were justifiable, if ever it could be so, we find it expressly avoided; and that is, in the case of “*Michael* the archangel, when
“contending with the devil about the body
“of *Moses*, the apostle tells us, he durst
“not bring against *him* a railing accusation, but “only” said, The Lord rebuke
“thee.”

LET

* *Jude*, ver. 9.

of a churlish disposition.

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LET us by no means think to slight these **SER-**
kinds of subjects, in complaisance to those **IX.**
most ignorant of all men, who contemptu-
ously call them mere morality, carnal or-
dinances, and the like. Our business is to
endeavour to be, and it is by these things
only we can be, perfect. And if we will
conform to the excellent system of chris-
tianity, we must follow the full directions
of the apostles, "Whatsoever things are
"lovely, whatsoever things are of good
"report; if there be any *virtue*, if there
"be any **PRAISE**," we must "think of
"these things."

** Phil. iv. 8.*

SER-

SERMON X

On *Nathan's* parable, and its effect
on *David*.

2 S A M. xii. 7.

*And Nathan said unto David, Thou art
the man.*

SERM.
X.

WHAT a frail and weak creature is man! and how imperfect are human virtues! We have an instance before us of a person, otherwise after God's own heart, of great integrity, and exalted piety, falling into the most complicate crime that perhaps is recorded in history; and for a long time continuing hardened and insensible.—How great is the goodness of God, and his compassion! Notwithstanding the aggravations of the crime, and the continuance of the guilt, he will not suffer such a man to perish

with in it; but sends a prophet, a special messenger, on purpose to awaken him out of it, and recover him to a sense of his duty.

In discoursing on this subject, I shall,

- I. RELATE to you the crime *David* had been guilty of; and the manner and address with which *Nathan* treated him on the occasion. And,
- II. ENQUIRE what useful and instructive lessons we may learn from it.

I. THE crime *David* had been guilty of, was taking and defiling the wife of one of his subjects, *Uriah* the *Hittite*; and when she was with child by him, sending for her husband out of his army, that by conversing with his wife, he might not know but the child was his own. But the man, with infinite gallantry and bravery, disdained the soft dalliance of sensual pleasure, and instead of going down to his own house, sleeps at the door of the King's: And when *David*, finding his plot had not succeeded, questions him about it, gives this heroic answer, "The Ark, and *Israel*, and *Judah* abide in tents; and my Lord,

" *Joab*,

SAM. " *Joab*, and the servants of my Lord are
 K. encamped in the open fields; shall I
 " then go into my house to eat and to
 " drink, and to lie with my wife? As
 " thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will
 " not do this thing."—One would have
 thought so noble an answer should have
 charmed a soldier and a King, and have
 bound his master to him in an everlasting
 bond of friendship. But the man who was
 capable of the first baseness, the infamous
 adultery, had lost all present sentiments of
 honour and glory, and instead of being
 struck with a sense of his treachery to this
 brave and honest servant, first contrives to
 inflame him with wine; and he abiding
 even in that condition by his resolution,
 then sends a letter to the general of his
 army in these villanous assassinating terms,
 " Set *Uriah* in the fore-front of the hottest
 " battle, and retire ye from him, that he
 " may be smitten and die." This suc-
 ceeded accordingly, and " oh how treacher-
 " ously did the mighty fall, and the wea-
 " pons of war perish!"

HOWEVER, the just and righteous God
 winked not at this wickedness. *David's*
 enemies " came out upon his army, then

" lying

“lying before the city of *Rabbah* of the *SEEM*
 “children of *Ammon*, and prevailed against *X*
 “them:” And *Joab*, conscious of his ill
 conduct, contrives to make his peace with
 the King, by sending him word of the
 death of this intrepid man. Which satis-
 fies him so much under the loss, that he
 even returns a message to comfort the dis-
 comfited General, in terms mean and ser-
 vile, as his first letter was base and cruel,
 “Thus shalt thou say unto *Joab*, let not
 “this thing displease thee; for the sword
 “devoureth one as well as another: Make
 “thy battle more strong against the city,
 “and overthrow it; and encourage thou
 “him.”

Good God, how does vice unhinge the
 mind! Would one think this was the man,
 that “slew a giant when he was yet but
 “young, and took away reproach from
 “the people?” This the man, who was
 so tender of his subjects, that when he had
 brought a pestilence upon them by his
 wickedness in numbering the people, he
 would fain have stood in the gap, and
 been a sacrifice for them, “Lo, I have
 “sinned, and done wickedly, but these
 “sheep,

Q

SERMON. "Sheep, what have they done? Let thine

X. "anger, I pray thee, be against me, and

~ "against my father's house?"

And yet it is indeed the very same man, the gallant leader of the battles of the Lord; the good King; "the man after God's own heart."^b Who, however unaccountable and inconsistent his long security may seem to us, is no sooner told of his crime in the person of another, but his anger is greatly kindled, and he makes the most solemn oath, that "the man that hath done this thing shall surely die; as well as restore four-fold." His real sense of things was not lost: His love of virtue, and abhorrence of vice, have still deep root in his heart: And when *Nathan* tells him with the gravity and courage of a prophet, "Thou art the man," he shows none of the pride of a King; he is not at all angry at being ensnared into pronouncing a verdict against himself, but his heart immediately smites him, and he hesitates not a moment to acknowledge his crime, but said unto *Nathan* "I have sinned against the Lord." Which was spoke with such a true, such a deep, such a sincere remorse, that

^a 2 Sam. xxiv. 17.

^b 1 Sam. xiii. 14.

its effect on *David*.

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that his repentance is at once accepted; for **SERMON.**
in the same verse, "*Nathan* said unto **X.**
"*David*, the Lord also hath put away
"thy sin, thou shalt not die."

THE address with which *Nathan* brought him to this sense of his sin, is too delicate to bear any paraphrase, and too beautiful not to be repeated. "And the Lord sent *Nathan* unto *David*; and he came unto him, and said unto him, "There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing save one little ewe-lamb, which he had bought, and nourished up: And it grew up together with him and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd to dress for the way-faring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come unto him."

SERM.

X.

THE effect of this parable we have already seen, "And *David's* anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to *Nathan*, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die. And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he hath done this thing, and because he had no pity."

You see here his very great anger and resentment at only a *part* of his own crime. Here is nothing at all as yet hinted by *Nathan* of the base murder of the poor man into the bargain. Here is nothing at all said, that the poor man had been servant to him that was rich;—that he had been faithful in all his trust, and was at the very time that his lamb was thus taken from him, fighting his battles with a courage almost unparaleled, and with a hardiness that disdained the indulgence which his master in person offered him;—that he was of a disposition so far from breaking into another's fold, that in the time of his master's service, he neither looked into, nor enquired after the state of his own. I say, here are many circumstances which infinitely aggravated his guilt, concealed, and yet we see his anger waxing

its effect on *David*.

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ing to the hottest. Nevertheless, *Nathan's* SERMON.
address in concealing these circumstances X.
was very masterly. The crime itself was
so heinous that it needed no aggravation;
and, as he was a prophet, he was to set
an example to others of a proper manner of
reproof, which often loses its effect when
cloathed in bitterness and reproach, and
carries too much an air of superiority and
malicious pleasure.

HAD he put it in a rude and coarse
manner, as many who abound in spiritual
pride might have done, I will venture to
say, he had missed his aim, and rather
hardened *David* in his fault, than reclaim-
ed him from it. Had he come bluntly to
the point at once, or prefaced it with the
dignity, or spirituality, of his own office;
had he denounced the judgments of God
upon him, or reproached him how unwor-
thy he had acted of the royal authority:
It might have "kindled his anger" in-
deed, not against himself, but against the
prophet. And that is the reason why ad-
vice and reproof do so little good among
men; the ill-judged manner in which they
are given, very unlike the apostle's injunc-
tion, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in

Q 3

" 2

SERM. "a fault, ye which are spiritual restore

X. "such a one in the spirit of meekness,
 "considering thyself, lest thou also be
 "tempted."

II. I PROCEED therefore to the second thing I proposed, namely, To enquire what useful, and instructive lessons we may learn from this part of sacred history.

1st, AND the first is, the manner, as well as the necessity, of giving reproof. For surely if a prophet, sent with a special message from God himself, could find it proper, on so extraordinary an occasion, to make use of address and circumlocution, nay of fiction and artifice, in order to render his reproof effectual; other persons of inferior office, with no pretence to inspiration, should wait the proper times and seasons, the temper and disposition, should cloath their expressions in modesty, and decency, and mildness, and should take particular care to consider, whether they are proper persons to offer it at all. Proper, I mean, with regard to their age, situation, and the opinion the person to be reproofed has of them: Or, if they find they are

are likely to do no good, or to do hurt, **SERM.**
whether they are skillful enough to rectify **X**
their mistake by a decent retreat, so as to
resume the reproof at a more convenient
season, and have patience to watch it, and
address to lay hold of it. For it is a
shrewd suspicion, when a man thinks, or
says, "Well, I have done my duty, he
"must now even take his own course,"
that he had consulted more his own pride,
than the good of the patient: For this is
one of the offices in which men ought
never to be weary of well doing.

MEN, who, as I said, are proper for it.
For there is something in human nature
that will not easily bear an assuming su-
periority, or dictating pride in others.
There are men in whose mouths truth it-
self will not appear truth. As, a flatterer
may give us only our just praise in such a
falsome manner as to be extremely offen-
sive; so, people who affect the character of
plain-dealers, may speak their minds, and
tell nothing but the truth, in such a man-
ner as to enrage rather than to reform.
Perhaps, few persons have philosophy e-
nough to bear rough advice from a servant,
or people of liberal professions from a me-
chanic,

SERM. chanic, nor any one from those who are

X. reputed busy-bodies, or persons forward to find fault. It is not enough to say, they speak nothing but the truth; the business is to gain the end: And as it is a duty of morality to hide a man's faults from others, there may be times and seasons when it may be proper to hide them, in some measure, from himself.

BUT above all, we must take particular care that the crime we are about to rebuke be really and indisputably committed; that it be not merely a matter of suspicion, or taken up on idle rumours or reports; for, in such a case, we shall ourselves offend against the delicacy of christian charity, which "thinketh no evil,"^a and "speaketh evil of no man,"^b but has the most tender and candid regard for the reputation of every fellow-creature.

Now I am upon this subject, I cannot forbear taking notice of one method of reproof, by which some, who are peculiarly skilful in it, may sometimes do good service, but which more frequently, and when carried to any length, does a great deal of mischief, and that is raillery:

Which

^a 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

^b Tit. iii. 2.

Which is a sort of familiar personal satire, SERM.
by which the fault of the patient is to be X.
in such a manner insinuated, that he can-

not but take what is said to himself, and yet all occasion of resentment is avoided, there not being so much said as is meant; and the end is, to make him partly be ashamed of, and partly to laugh at himself. But this is one of the most delicate parts to act. If he is so much ashamed as to mend the crime, you have got your purpose without giving him too much pain, or making an enemy. But if the ridicule be too much indulged, there is great danger of the sense of the fault being lost in it; or, if you make him too much ashamed, there is great danger, if it be in company, of its ending in anger and resentment, which may rivet the crime, and create a resolution never to mend it at all. And indeed, I am afraid it is too certain, that more persons have been bantered into vice, than into virtue; and unless it be managed with great prudence, it is a species of that "foolish talking and jesting," which the apostle says, "are not convenient;" that is, neither suit the character of a christian, nor the person to whom they are applied,

^a *Eph. v. 4.*

SERM. applied, nor come up to, or answer the purpose. For which reason, in all these cases, the end should be kept in view, and when we see that endangered, it is time to turn the conversation to another subject.

2dly, BUT, though a delicate and proper manner of giving reproof be one of the principal lessons we are to learn from the history before us, in the second place, the necessity of doing it, by proper persons, and on proper occasions, is another. We see how long *David* had continued hardened in his crime for want of it. A man of very extraordinary and superior understanding, a man of the most refined judgment in morals, and of piety beyond example: Nay, a man of tenderness and compassion, on all other occasions, to the utmost sensibility. His lamentation over *Saul* and *Jonathan*,^a his concern for his son *Abshalom*, when he was in actual rebellion against him, and a disturber of the publick peace; ^b his being so easily prevailed upon by the widow of *Tekoah* to fetch him home before, ^c his pathetick grief upon his death,

^a 2 Sam. i. 17, &c. ^b 2 Sam. xviii. 5. ^c 2 Sam. xiv. 21. ^d 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

his patient behaviour under the outrageous S E R M.
 curses of *Shimei*; * and many other in-
 stances, show the humanity and generosity
 of his disposition. And yet he could abide
 almost a full year unconscious and uncon-
 cerned about no less crimes than adultery
 and murder; and had not *Nathan* roused
 him to repentance, he might perhaps have
 died impenitent and unreclaimed. The
 very thought whereof, when we reflect on
 the dispositions mentioned, fills one with
 horror and trembling; and how amiable
 does the character of the prophet appear,
 in "saving such a soul from death, and
 "hiding a multitude of such sins?"

ON the other hand, let us consider with
 ourselves *Nathan* neglecting his duty, plead-
 ing that he was afraid of the King's dis-
 pleasure, and did not know what might
 be the consequence; that he was himself a
 man of excellent sense, and would see his
 crime e'er long, and humble himself of
 course; and, through this supineness and
 timorousness of his, *David* continuing hard-
 ened to the last, and dying impenitent,
 what indignation must we conceive against
 the prophet! It is for reasons of this na-
 ture

* 2 Sam. xvi. 10.

† James v. 20.

SERMON. ture, that we find the *Jewish* law gives

X. represents hatred, and declining to reprove as one and the same thing. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart." "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him;" or, as it is in the margin, that thou bear not sin for him. And there are some cases in the civil law, where a man seeing another about to commit a crime, and not hindering him from doing it, shall be looked upon, and treated as an accomplice. And it is an equal crime in morals, not to do our utmost to reclaim, as well as to prevent.

3dly, ANOTHER lesson we are to learn from this history is, not utterly to condemn men for any one or more wicked actions of their lives, but from the general tenor and course of them. There is an admirable impartiality in the relation of the histories of the *Old* and *New Testaments*; which though they are written for our instruction and example, yet mention the several faults of the persons celebrated in them, as well as their virtues. This is very remarkable in the cases of *Noah's* drunkenness and incest, though he was the person God pitched

its effect on David.

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upon account of the goodness of his S E R M.
character on the whole, to survive the X.
flood, and re-people the world after it;—
of *Abraham's* equivocation to *Abimelech*
King of *Gerar* about the relation he stood
in to *Sarah* his wife, notwithstanding he is
called “the friend of God, and the father
“of the faithful;”—of the rash anger of
Moses, though he is celebrated for his ex-
emplary meekness;—and, to mention no
more, the writers of the *New Testament*
make no scruple to give an account of their
own failings, and the failings of those who
were engaged in the same cause with them-
selves. The false ambition of our Saviour's
disciples, and their mistakes about a tem-
poral kingdom; even “the beloved disci-
ple” himself “not knowing what spirit
“he was of,” but desiring his master “to
“call fire from heaven to consume the
“*Samaritans* ;” and the sharp contest be-
tween *St. Paul* and *Barnabas*, are all in-
stances of this kind, very different from the
general romantick writings of ordinary bio-
graphers.

AND the sacred historians seem to have
two reasons for this. One, to evince their
own impartiality; the other, by giving a
true account of human nature, that it is a

SERMON, mixture of folly and vice, as well as virtue

X. even in the best of men, to teach us a proper candor and compassion for its infirmities. Adultery and murder are the greatest crimes mankind is capable of. The one, is breaking in upon, and violating the most sacred of all engagements, alienating the softest social affection, that which gives the truest and purest pleasure to life, introduces a spurious offspring into those inheritances, which all wise and well-regulated states have excluded them from. A crime, which dissolves the matrimonial contract; which has been often thought an excuse for murder itself; is represented by all good writers as of the foulest nature, who call it by the odious names of stain, filth, defilement, and the like; and in many countries has been punished even with death.

THE other, murder, is destroying the noblest work of God, assuming his sovereign power in deciding the fates of his creatures; putting an end to their trial here, and sending them to give an account to their judge, before he in the course of nature calls them to it; to say nothing of those inferior considerations, that it is de-

priving

its effect on *David*.

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priving society of a member, and perhaps many persons of not only the most endearing, but the most important and necessary relations, their comfort, and their support too: A crime, which ordinarily fills the mind with the utmost horror, not only haunting its thoughts by day, but its dreams by night; destroying all self-enjoyment, even after it is got out of every possible reach of publick vengeance.

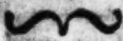
S E A M.

X

AND yet, here is a very good and pious man so off his guard, as not only to fall into one of them, but to add the other to it; in order to conceal it. Notwithstanding which, the holy scripture tells us when he died, which was about twenty years after, that "he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour;" and in "another place, that he did that which "was right in the eyes of the Lord, and "turned not aside from any thing that he "commanded him all the days of his "life" — save only in the matter of "Uriah the Hittite." And he is expressly named by the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews*, as one of those "who

had

SERM. "had obtained a good report through
X. "faith."



SINCE then God Almighty, the sovereign Judge of mankind, who "touch the heart and the reins," does thus, upon sincere repentance, bear testimony to the characters of men; let not us, who are ourselves frail and sinful creatures, be more severe. Let us not by blackening the reputations of men, prevent and take away from them opportunities of repentance, but be as indulgent to them, and as ready to receive them with open arms, as their Maker. And let such instances of the forgiveness of great and enormous sins, be an encouragement to the greatest of sinners to repent.

And, BUT though this be another of the lessons we are to learn from this, and such like histories, I must observe, *fourthly*, that nothing can be more idle and preposterous, than the inference some are apt to draw from them, that since such good men have been guilty of such things, they are perhaps no crimes, or however will not be punished so severely as is threatened, and from thence take encouragement in the boldest

^a Heb. xi. 39.

^b Ps. vii. 9.

boldest impieties. It is very evident from *SEAM.*
the history of these good men in scripture, **X.**
that, upon the whole, they acted on fixed
and steady principles of virtue: And that
they sometimes, through the force of temp-
tation, or through inconsideration, might
deviate from them, is to be imputed to the
weakness and frailty of human nature.
And, what ought not to be passed over un-
observed, is, that their faults were far from
being habitual. We see how bitter their
repentance was. What man then in his
wits would deliberately lay up cause for the
same contrition? Indeed, who can consis-
tently do it? Repentance, is sorrow on a
conviction of having done wrong, together
with future reformation: And when any
have thus sincerely repented, it will that
moment be told them, as we have already
seen *Nathan* told *David*, "the Lord hath
put away thy sin, thou shalt not die." But
who can previously be assured of such a
change in himself? Nay, such a determi-
nation, or post-poning of future repentance,
is a very strong presumption that it will
never take place; because it is inconsistent
with all rational principle whatsoever.

SERM.

X.

as more ungrateful in civil life, than to abuse the tenderness and goodness of a friend. Every body respects it as a scandalous imposition. And I believe there never was a prince who would pardon a crime, that knew the malefactor had wantonly committed it, presuming on his easy nature, or boasting that he was sure he could procure a pardon.

It is a maxim in morality, that we cannot be too candid in our judgment on others, nor too severe on ourselves. And whoever will read the fifty-first psalm, which *David* composed immediately on this conversation with *Nathan*, will see such a real grief as no one would willingly purchase for himself: Nevertheless, we see the use he makes of it in his prayer to God on the occasion, that he might entice sinners to repentance thereby, "O give me the
" comfort of thy help again, and establish
" me with thy free spirit. Then shall I
" teach thy ways unto the wicked, and
" sinners shall be converted unto thee."

5thly, THE last lesson I shall mention to be learnt from this history, is, the guard
good

good men should always have upon them- SERM.
selves, lest they deviate from the practice X.

Every one may not meet with
so faithful a monitor as *Nathan*; nor has
every one the same previous good dispositi-
ons as *David*. Temptations are dangerous
things; and therefore our Saviour has
taught his disciples to pray constantly that
they may not be led into them.* No one
should presume on his own strength; for
we see, even the best of men may fall:
"The man after God's own heart" may
give great occasion "to the enemies of the
Lord to blaspheme."^b Nay, so weak
is human nature, that Satan had the con-
fidence to attempt even the Son of God
himself, when "he took on him the seed
of *Abraham*, and was found in fashion
as a man," and to renew the temptation
after several repulses. And the weakness
of human nature, is so far from being an
inducement to indulging ourselves; that it
is the very reason not to do it, for fear of
the fatal consequences; in the same man-
ner, as a kind parent would deny a sickly,
unhealthy child many things, which he

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might

* *Matt.* vi. 13.^b *2 Sam.* xii. 14.

SERMON. might freely allow to one more hardy and
X. robust.

For which reason it will always be
wise in us, whenever we meet with any
temptation, to hold up to ourselves by way
of memento, "how many it has cast
"down wounded, yea how many strong
"men have been slain by it." And
our Saviour bids his disciples "remember
"Lot's wife,"^b so let us all, for the mortifi-
cation of human nature, remember, that
when *Nathan* spake the parable of the rich
man "who had exceeding many flocks
"and herds, but spared to take of them to
"dress for the way-faring man that was
"come unto him, but took the poor
"man's lamb, and dressed it for the man
"that was come unto him," though *Da-
vid's* anger was greatly kindled at the re-
lation, yet he himself was "the man."

To conclude the whole, let us tremble
at the thought, that however secret we
may think ourselves in our vices, yet the
eye of the omnipresent Being is upon us.
And particularly, let those who imagine
themselves to be above the cognizance of
all human laws, be informed that there

^a Prov. vii. 26.

^b Luke xvii. 32.

is a Being infinitely superior to them, at SERM.
whose disposal they absolutely are; and X.
though their confederates may be as faithful to their infamous secrets as *Joab* was in the case before us, yet at the day of judgment, every one they have injured, shall have ample justice done him; and that there is no other way to avoid it, but by the same deep remorse in this life which *David* testified, and sincere acknowledgment that they "have sinned against the Lord." Without which, since prophecy is ceased, there is no power on this side the grave that can absolve them, or assure them that "the Lord hath put away their sin," but they "shall surely die" by an everlasting destruction from his presence.

SERMON XI.

On simplicity of conversation.

MATT. v. 37.

*But let your communication be yea, yea;
nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than
these cometh of evil.*

SERM.
XI.

OUR Saviour having taken upon
him in his excellent sermon on
the mount, to rectify several mis-
takes in points of morality, which had pre-
vailed among the *Jews*; arising either from
too strict a regard to the letter of the law,
without attending to the reason and design
of it; or else, from the false glosses of the
teachers and paraphrasts; or from the tra-
dition of their fathers: Among others
takes occasion to mention a mistake about
voluntary and unnecessary oaths; which
their doctors were not so careful, it seems,
to caution them against, as they were ri-
gorous

gorous in exacting the performance of, SERM.
when thus rashly and foolishly made. XI.
Which rigorous performance was, no doubt,
a very righteous and necessary part of morality: And therefore our Saviour cannot
be supposed to advance any thing against it.

BUT forasmuch as men, by such unnecessary oaths, might draw upon themselves great inconveniences; he advises to lay such things aside, and converse with one another in that plainness and simplicity of speech, as was the mere transcript of their minds: Doing what, in every circumstance that arose, should appear to them right and proper, without laying themselves under obligations of doing what they might afterwards repent. And from this particular circumstance he takes occasion to lay down a general rule in the text, that their "communion should be yea, yea, nay, nay;" for this reason, that "whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil;" that is, arises from an evil disposition of mind, or is the effect of such customs as are generally productive of evil.

AND so we find, in fact, among the Jews; when they saw the inconveniences

SERM. of Swearing by God, from the obligation

XI.

they were under to perform their oaths; they began to trifle with oaths, to swear by heaven, or by the earth, or by *Jerusalem*, or by any other creature: Imagining they might thereby evade the penalty of breaking them. But our Saviour tells them, that all these did, in effect, amount to swearing by the sacred name of God himself, "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; neither by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by *Jerusalem*, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay;" that is, let it be plain and simple, without mixing any thing foreign to the purpose, or that looks like trifling with sacred things, or which may bring you into inconveniences you may afterwards repent of.

BUT forasmuch as this precept has been interpreted into too rigorous a meaning by some, as if it related not only to the ordinary commerce between man and man; but as if, in extraordinary cases, it for-

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bade those solemn oaths that have been in SERM.

all ages, and in all countries, the ground, and confirmation of judicial proceedings, and an end of all strife, and to which God himself has sometimes condescended, "swearing by himself;" and which the apostles have thought proper sometimes to use in their writings, in order to make the stronger impression of what they said: I shall briefly consider this interpretation, before I proceed to my principal design; which is,

XI.

To show what vices are forbidden by the text, together with their mischievous consequences and effects.

WITH regard then to the interpretation I have mentioned^b, The reasons against swearing in ordinary conversation, will not hold on extraordinary occasions, or in civil courts of judicature. For in common life, every man has rules of prudence whereby to judge what credit he thinks proper to give

^a *Heb. vi. 13.* ^b This interpretation is maintained by the people commonly called *Quakers*, and the reasons they give for it may be seen in the most learned and ingenious writer among them, *Robert Barclay's Apology*, Prop. 15. Sect. 10.

SERMON give to another; the man's character, for example, the nature of what he says, his interest in saying it, and the like: And at last is under no obligation to be influenced by him, but is free to act, or not to act, according to his information. But in judicial cases; especially in this country, where judges and jury must go according to law, and the known customs and usages of the land, without the least arbitrary proceeding, or otherwise following their private opinion; there can be no such allowance for rules of prudence, nor any choice whether they will be influenced by evidence, or decline to pass judgment, but they must go by some fixed stated rule; which, in good policy, should be such a one as may stamp the most solemn impression on witnesses: And this, in all countries, has been universally agreed, from the beginning of time, to be by their appealing to God, upon pain of his severest judgments, that what they say is true. "For men verily," says the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews*, "swear by the greater: And an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife."

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THE distinction therefore between an oath, and a solemn affirmation, is a mere trifling fallacy and evasion. For, whoever

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gives a false affirmation, the crime and punishment are the same, by all laws human and divine. For which reason, the suggestion, likewise, that the indulgence given by the government to such scrupulous persons, is an extraordinary privilege, and lessens their obligation to give a true evidence, is extremely idle. For these people cannot but know that we are always in the presence of God; and that every solemn word, and action of life is known to him, and we must "give an account" of them, as well as of every "idle word" in "the day of judgment." And why any of the creatures and dependants of God, who know they are always under his eye, that they are accountable to him, and must finally be judged by him, should refuse to appeal to him, no good reason can be given.

THERE can be none in morality, because it was a duty under the law of *Moses*; has been practised by God himself; by his prophets, and by his apostles. From whence it is evident that it is not contrary, either,

SERMON. either, to christianity, which no one knew better than St. *Paul*; and yet upon solemn and extraordinary occasions, we find him in some of his epistles, "calling God for a record upon his soul;" and frequently appealing to him as a witness of the truth of what he said. And therefore it is contrary to all rules of criticism, to interpret those passages in the *New Testament* that forbid swearing, in any other sense, than on light and trivial occasions.

BESIDES, the other would have been of very pernicious consequence to christianity, as it would have prejudiced mankind, and especially governors and persons in power, against a religion that removed so great a security, and the firmest ground of confidence among men: Which is quite contrary to the known prudence and precaution of the apostles; who, upon all occasions, inculcate on their Proselytes to be obedient to government, and to obey magistrates; which in many cases, upon that supposition, they could not have been.

AND in reason and good policy, it is so far from being criminal to take an oath in a court of justice, or to swear on any other solemn

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solemn occasion; that it is one of the strongest arguments against common and ordinary swearing, that it tends to lessen the reverence due to such solemn oaths. And it is against that the passage, of which the text is a part, is levelled; as is evident from the whole nature of our Saviour's conversation, as already shown.

BUT as the general precept of the text will be found to prohibit other vices, as well as profane swearing; I shall particularize those which seem to be most obviously comprehended under it.

1st, THE absurdity and wickedness of common and ordinary swearing, will appear, from its tendency to take off the influence, the sacred and awful name of God should always have upon our minds. For, though it is our duty to acquaint ourselves with him, to delight in him, and to love him with the sincerest and most constant affection: Yet, to be so very familiar with him, and to prostitute his name to the lowest and lightest occasions, is certainly inconsistent with the fear due to him, and that

SERM. that standing in awe of him so frequently

XI. inculcated in the scriptures, and so naturally arising from the contemplation of his glorious and incomprehensible perfections. It is a sin against all rules of decency and propriety, ill-becoming our low estate, and the infinite distance there is between Him and us: An argument, - which I believe there is no man but feels the force of within himself. For, we find the most rude and shocking practitioners in this vice can easily forbear it in company where they think it offensive, and a violation of good breeding; and, if at any time they forget themselves, and an oath slips from them, can ask that pardon of a fellow-creature, and a mere mortal, which they never think of asking at the hands of the sovereign Ruler, who is principally affronted by it. Such should consider, that asking pardon implies a consciousness of guilt, or else is a gross affront to the understanding of the person they ask it of, and the most palpable breach of that good-manners they affect to be governed by. A consideration (if no better will prevail on them to forbear it) which, it were to be wished, persons of rank and condition would allow themselves

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to take with them. And indeed, one would SERM.
be glad to see them cured of it at any XI.
rate, though from no worthier a motive
than that of pride; the smartest and live-
liest of *them* being generally equalled, and
sometimes excelled, in this big language,
by the very lowest of the people: And it
is a practice, that does indeed level, as a
witty writer of our own country calls
them, *both the great vulgar, and the small.*

SWEARING is a very solemn act of reli-
gious worship; and therefore it is profaning
religion in the most shameful manner, to
introduce it into our ordinary conversation,
and, is as absurd and ridiculous, as if,
without the least reverence, or thought,
or attention, we were to take the same
wanton liberty with prayer, and singing
psalms, and its other holy ordinances, over
our cups, and in our merry-meetings.
There is scarce a man but would think this
was levelling all distinctions, rendering it
impossible to make any difference between
things sacred and profane, and would trem-
ble at the consequence; and yet, what
more is to be said in defence of the one,
than of the other? Or what worse conse-
quences to be dreaded?

AND

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AND not only does common swearing tend to lessen the reverence due to the sacred and awful name of God, but it is a very dangerous and likely means to lead men into perjury; as they are apt thereby to attest things they know to be false, and to affirm things in the same manner that are dubious and uncertain. A sin of so shocking a kind, that a man of the least tender conscience would dread the most distant approaches to. A sin, so bad that no man is supposed guilty of it, without the strongest proof; nor his oath, without such proof, disallowed in civil proceedings. A sin, which the worst of men do ordinarily stand in fear of committing: Even *Herod*, who made no scruple of living in adultery, and incest, with his brother *Philip's* wife, when he had sworn to the daughter of *Herodias*, that whatsoever she should ask of him he would give it her, to the half of his kingdom, though "he was exceeding sorry" when he found her ask "that he would give her in a charger the head of *John the Baptist*;" yet, for his oath sake, "and for their sakes that sat with him, he would not reject her."

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I SHALL only farther under this particular, put all those who profess to believe in revelation, in mind of the third commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

2dly, THERE is another vice which is prohibited by the precept of the text; and that is, that execrable one of cursing, or malediction; which will not bear the distinction in the case we have been speaking of, its being fit and proper on solemn and extraordinary occasions, but not so lightly and wantonly: There being no occasion, ordinary or extraordinary, in which it is justifiable, except only in the case of a prophet's denouncing curses, or declaring to men the evil consequences of their vices, in this, or the other world; and then, by no means, to gratify any passion or resentment of their own, but only "in the name of the Lord." And so we find, that though *Balak* told *Balaam* that "he wotted that he whom he blessed, was blessed, and he whom he cursed, was cursed;" yet *Balaam*, great as his inclination was to the reward of divination,

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replies,

SERM. replies, that "if he would give him his

XI. "house full of silver and gold, he could

"not go beyond the commandment of
"the Lord, to do good or bad of his own
"mind."—But with regard to those cruel
wishes men are too apt to express against
one another, often on the most silly occa-
sions; if they really had them in their
hearts, a more diabolical disposition is not
to be imagined.

BUT suppose they have not; the absur-
dity and great wickedness of such wanton
expressions, extremely foreign, as one would
hope, from the real sentiments and disposi-
tions of the mind, will appear from this
observation, which will help us to judge
likewise of the propriety of what remains
to be said on the passage before us: That
the design of language, which God has giv-
en us, and by which he has distinguished
man from all the other creatures on this
globe, is to communicate our sentiments,
and to explain our intentions. Which can
never be answered, without a perfect con-
formity of our language to our ideas; and
it is the only obvious and natural, and
therefore the only true, way of conceiving

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of the ideas of another, by the language in SERM.
which he cloaths them. To express, there- XI.
fore, what we do not mean, is contradict-
ing the wise and gracious ends of Provi-
dence; which, in truth, is the sum of
wickedness and vice.

Now, by this way of interpretation,
what detestation, what abhorrence, is it
not natural to conceive of those, who, at
every sentence almost, are praying to God
to destroy either the bodies, or souls of
themselves, or others! Sometimes of their
most intimate associates, their dearest
friends, their most generous benefactors,
persons whom they love with a reality as
warm, as are the words in which they seem
to express the most diabolical hatred; not
to condescend to take notice of the absurd,
and silly expressions made use of on such
occasions.—One knows not what name to
give to such strange kind of falshood; and
can only hope, that God who sees their
hearts, and knows their hypocrisy, will not
treat them with the same severity as hypo-
crites of more oily words, and more mali-
cious hearts.—As for those who are really
wicked enough to mean what they say,
and wish the evil they petition for; they

SERM. should more properly be considered in other
 XI. discourses, relating to those who are "of
 " their father the devil, and the lusts of
 " their father they will do."

3dly, BUT the precept of the text is, by no means, designed only to forbid those bold and outrageous vices: It is levelled against every kind of insincerity and deceit. But forasmuch as here too, it has been interpreted into too rigorous a sense, as if it forbade all kinds of compliment, and what the polite world have agreed to call good-breeding; I shall show, not only from reason, but from passages of the sacred books, that it ought not, it cannot, be understood in so rude and untoward a sense.

OUR Saviour's precept, that "whoever would be chief among his disciples, should be their servant:"^b—St. Peter's exhortation, "to be courteous,"^c St. Paul's address to *Felix*,^d *David*'s message to *Nabal*,^e *Abram*'s complaisance to the children of *Heth*,^f and innumerable other instances of the exactest decorum, conformable to the customs then in being, are the strongest arguments, that revelation countenances

^a John viii. 44.

^b Matt. xx. 27.

^c 1 Pet. iii. 8.

^d Acts. xxiv. 10, &c.

^e 1 Sam. xiv. 5.

^f Gen.

xxiii. 7.

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tenances nothing rustic or unmannerly. And See M.
as to those expressions in common use that are XI.
objected to, as instances of insincerity, professing much more than is really and truly meant; it is such egregious trifling, and making such a jest of christianity, as were unworthy our notice; did we not see people, the gravity and propriety of whose deportment in other respects, show them to be in earnest.*

As language is arbitrary, which is evident from the diversity of it in the world, there is no other possible way of judging of the sincerity, or insincerity, of particular expressions, but by the common and ordinary usage of them: And those who scruple to profess themselves each other's servants, for example; that is, to do them all proper service in their power, seem to show the want of that benevolence, which is the distinguishing precept of christianity; not confined to particular friends, but extended to the whole human race: And the general use of the word *friend* is much more exceptionable; as the idea of friendship, in our language especially, is by no means general, but confined to some select persons;

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sons;

* Barclay's apology. Prop. 15. Sect. 3, 4, 5, 6, 16.

SERMONS; to whom, however, if we were to
 XI. confine our benevolence, it would be very
 unworthy the noble spirit of our religion.

THERE is no end of such low criticisms. And christianity could not have stood the nice examination of so many ages, had it been of so peevish and obstinate a nature. On the contrary, if it were the universal agreement to alter the meaning of every word in a language; they who, in spite of such agreement, would adhere to the obsolete use of it, and not those who conformed to the standard of the times, would be guilty of the fallhood, and conveying fallacious ideas. So that nothing can be more weak, and of worse consequence to religion, than a strict adherence to the letter of a precept, against common sense and reason.

HOWEVER, the precept of the text is as strong as may be, not only against studied and premeditated deceit; but against using such expressions as may be liable to be taken in a wrong sense, or raise ideas, or lead men to depend on promises, we never meant. We may mistake, and run to extravagant lengths, in our expressions, on the side of civility and complaisance, as well as in

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unnecessary bluntness, and plain-dealing. SERM.
The chief business of language is, to keep XI
to truth, in the best manner that will gain
the end. And though artifice, and fiction,
and circumlocution are very defensible,
when they answer the purpose, without
leading any one into prejudicial mistakes;
yet we must take the exactest care to pre-
serve truth sacred and inviolable. *Nathan's*
parable was precisely, in every circum-
stance, however delicately concealed, the
case of *David*; but had he thrown in any
other circumstances, not relating to him,
it had been false, and had offended against
the precept of the text. So likewise when
we profess to do a man a kindness, if we
throw in a circumstance more than is ne-
cessary, and raise his expectations, beyond
what we intend to do for him, we are de-
ceivers, and worse than our words. And
though it shows great folly, and ignorance
of the world, to interpret common civili-
ties, into large and magnificent promises,
yet it is cruel sporting with, and a most
unmanly insult upon the necessities of the
dependent, for the rich and great to raise
their expectations, and keep them in long
attendance, in vain: Much more would

SERM. it be to their own honour, as well as to the happiness of those who have to do with them, if they would change their courtly smiles and captivating professions, into the literal "yea, yea, and nay, nay," of the text.

4thly, THERE can be but one excuse for such trifling; and that is, that it seems a sort of similar return for the shameful flattery offered them, which sins so presumptuously against the subject we are upon. A vice that shows a base and sordid mind in the person offering it, and may be of very dangerous consequence to the idol to whom it is sacrificed, if he is weak enough to accept it with pleasure; and yet the wise themselves are too apt to be caught and corrupted by it: A vice, which the Psalmist joins with another of the meanest kind, and against which one has scarce any guard, "With flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak;"^a and which Job tells us is very heinous in the sight of God, "I know not to give flattering titles to any, for in so doing my Maker would soon take me away."^b

^a Ps. xii. 2.

^b Job xxxii. 22.

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gibly, THERE is another vice against **SERM.**
which the precept of the text is intended; **XL**

namely, the arts of fraud and deceit, in
use among those who call themselves men
of business; such as *Solomon* takes notice of,

"It is naught, it is naught, saith the
"buyer, but when he goeth his way
"then he boasteth;"

condemning all
equivocation, all the methods of hiding
the defects, or of over-rating the good qua-
lities of a commodity; all attempts to over-
reach, whether in buying or selling, and

especially the scandalous custom of imposing
on the ignorant, and persons unskilled in
the same wicked arts; and this, whether

it be in word or deed, the expression,
"Let your communication," being compre-
hensive of all dealings among men what-
soever, requiring the exactest fairness and

sincerity; and, in short, doing to others,
whatsoever we would they should do
unto us." — And the more serious and

important the affairs we are transacting
are, the more plain and upright we should
be; acting upon principles of the nicest ho-
nour, scorning to take any advantage, tho

defects, or weakness of human laws may
give

^a Prov. xx. 14.

^b Matt. vii. 12.

SERAM. give us; but paying the most devout regard to that superior law every man has in his own breast; adhering closely, as far as our circumstances will allow, to the real intent and meaning of all our promises and engagements, to the understanding of those we are concerned with, as well as of ourselves.

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6thly, AND as the general rule of christian morality is to act with sincerity and uprightness as in the sight of God; whom no art, no colouring, no evasion, can delude; we are hereby likewise forbidden all sophistical prevarication in those disputes and arguments wherein we are searching after truth in general; or consulting and deliberating about publick affairs; or engaging the attention of those who are to decide any causes or questions in controversy, concerning ourselves or others.

And this seems to me to be the meaning of that passage in the gospel, which has so much perplexed many scrupulous, well-meaning persons; as if it forbade all cheerful and enlivening conversation, and every thing that is not sententiously grave;
 " Every idle word that men shall speak,
 " they shall give an account thereof in the

" day

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"day of judgment;" which cannot mean those ornaments or decorations that may not perhaps be strictly and absolutely necessary (for few, even the best, masters of language, are capable of such a laconic stile) but every thing which tends to lead men away from the purpose; to throw a false gloss or colouring over the cause; to confound the subject, and make them mistake one thing for another, like the evasive answers given by the oracles of old, or the modern followers of antichrist. For this was evidently the case of the Pharisees, to whom our Saviour was speaking. For they had endeavoured to draw aside the attention of the people from his miracles, by pretending, what they themselves could not think, that they were wrought by *Beelzebub*, the prince of demons; which was the sin against the Holy Ghost, not to be forgiven either in this world, or in the world to come.

7thly, The last vice I shall mention as prohibited by the text, is, that of a double tongue; speaking smoothly to peoples faces, but ridiculing, or flandering them in their absence; in one or other of which, there must

S. N. M. must be much falshood and deceit. And
 XI. this is a practice among many, who have
 no evil intention, no malice of heart; but
 from mere wantonness, and lust of talk-
 ing; the thing *Solomon* means, when he
 says, "In a multitude of words there
 "wanteth not sin;" and *St. James*, "If
 "any man among you seemeth to be reli-
 "gious, and bridleth not his tongue, but
 "deceiveth his own heart; that man's reli-
 "gion is vain." A vice which leads men,
 merely for the sake of saying something, to
 say often what is false; or, if it is true,
 what may be of very evil consequence to the
 good name of another, or may discover his
 secrets, or give hints that may be improved
 to his disadvantage. And this is often the
 reason of that strange, and very unseemly,
 contradiction of a double tongue, that has
 so much the appearance of hypocrisy, ma-
 lice, and a false dissembling heart; one of
 the reasons why philosophers of all ages,
 have laid down such excellent precepts of
 taciturnity: Not that there is any evil in
 talking, in itself; but because when men
 are off their guard, they are so apt to run
 into that "which cometh of evil."

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SERM.

XL

THE heinousness of all the vices I have mentioned I have already fully explained; and therefore there is no occasion to enlarge. I shall content myself with adding as a remedy against them; that, as the *grand* rule from which we ought never to swerve, is, the most sacred observation of real truth in our communication with one another; so, the most *prudent* one in order thereunto, is to check all unguardedness of speech; and to be modest and temperate in our words, as well as in our actions; remembering that declaration of our Lord, "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

BUT though this be a *mean* in order to preserve the end; truth *itself* is the thing always to be regarded.—Sacred, eternal, unalterable truth; the unerring rule of conduct even to God himself! For which reason, it is the noblest principle we can acquaint ourselves with, by which we can direct our conduct, and without which, we can have no pretence to call ourselves pro-

SERM. professors of the religion of truth, which

XI. God has sent his Son into the world to instruct us in.

UPON the whole, the vices I have been discouraging against, profane and common swearing; execrable cursing; the false deceitful promises of great men; the servile flattery of mean men; mercantile fraud and cunning; the false glosses and delusive colouring of the sophister; and the ridicule and slander of the smooth dissembler, are all, not only expressly forbidden by this text, but absolutely inconsistent with the whole genius of that religion, whose "re-
 " joicing is the testimony of conscience,
 " that in simplicity and godly sincerity,
 " not with fleshly wisdom, but by the
 " grace of God, we have our conversation
 " in the world."

1 Cor. i. 19.

SERMON XII.

On *Elisba's* curse, and the mischiefs
of bad education.

2 KINGS ii. 23, 24.

And he went up from thence unto Beth-el, and as he was going by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up thou Bald-head, Go up thou Bald-head. And he turned back and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord: And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

THE design of the scripture his-
tory is to give us an account of **XII.**
the several dispensations of God
to mankind, in order to instruct them in
the

SERMON. the knowledge of his nature, and the work-
 XII. ship he required at their hands, together
 with the various improvement they made
 under such dispensations.

He made a revelation of himself to
Adam in paradise: And his spirit strove
 with man in divers manners for near two
 thousand years, till the wickedness of man
 was so great in the earth, that God deter-
 mined to destroy it by the flood. For the
 re-peopling of it, he made a covenant with
Noah: In process of time he called *Abra-*
ham forth from his father's house into a
 strange land, where, after he had tried him
 and approved him as righteous, he esta-
 blished his covenant of blessing all the fa-
 milies of the earth, with him and his poste-
 rity: Among whom he raised up *Prophets*
 in almost every age, to put them in mind
 of it, and of the duty which it required on
 their part. And great occasion they had
 for such remonstrances, as they were per-
 petually running into rebellion against him
 "provoking him to jealousy with strange
 "gods, with abominations provoked they
 "him to anger; sacrificing unto devils
 "not to God; to gods whom they knew

"not

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"not; to new gods that came newly up, SERM.
"whom their fathers feared not." XII.

IN the reign of King *Abab*, idolatry was so universal among the children of *Israel*, that there were no less than "four hundred and fifty prophets of *Baal*, and four hundred prophets of the groves which did eat at *Jezebel's* table," and there was only one "who remained a prophet of the Lord, *Elijah* the *Tishbite*:" But who had acted so faithful and upright a part, that God conferred on him that peculiar mark of favour which he had before conferred on *Enoch*, that "he should not see death," but be translated, and taken up into heaven by a whirlwind. And this was no sudden thing, but was fore-known in the schools of the prophets both at *Beth-el* and at *Jericho*, where they spoke of it to *Elisba*, whom God had appointed to succeed him in the prophetic office. And *Elisba's* evidence of the fact must be out of all question, because the historian tells us, he was talking with *Elijah* at the time that the "chariot of fire and horses of fire" appeared to take him up into

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hea-

^a Deut. xxxii. 17.
ver. 22.

^b 1 Kings xviii. 19.
^c Heb. xi. 5.

^c Ib.

SERMON. heaven, and received "his mantle, and a

XII. "double portion of his spirit."

ONE would have thought so very extraordinary a thing, out of the common course of nature, that had never happened as we know of but once before, should have struck with infinite terror and amazement every person inclined to idolatry, against which God had in such a manner appeared in favour of his own prophet. But so far were they from being properly affected by it, that at *Beth-el* they seem not only to have made a jest of it themselves, but to teach their children to do the same. For the expression they use in the text, Go up thou Bald-head, Go up thou Bald-head, is not intended so much by way of mockery at the prophet's head, as at the story of his master's GOING UP into heaven in the manner that we have heard.

THIS those people seem never to have considered or taken notice of, particularly the author of a book, entitled, *Christianity as old as the creation*,* who think the story of the text to be so exceedingly barbarous and indefensible; who make light of the insult; represent the prophet as a man of

wrath

* Page 265, first edition.

mischiefs of bad education.

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wrath and passion, furious at a very small S. A. M.
provocation, and seem to treat the shoe-bears XII
coming out of the wood and tearing forty
and two children of them, either as a fable
and romance, or else as a mere accident,
without any immediate and extraordinary
interposition of providence.

My design in discoursing on it, is,

I. To show the heinousness of the crime,
in such lights as will justify both the
behaviour of the prophet, and the di-
vine conduct in so singular a judg-
ment. And then,

II. To take occasion from it, to show
the mischiefs of bad, and the neces-
sity of a good, education.

Our translation says, there came forth
LITTLE CHILDREN out of the city, and
stocked him, &c. But the *Hebrew* word
signifies both *little children*, and *young*
men well grown.* I will not take upon

T 2 me

כְּנָפִים כְּנָפִים כְּנָפִים is used, *Gen. xxiv. 19.* & *Sam.*
xv. 9. כְּנָפִים here translated *little*, is
said by *Castellus* to mean *little* in *quantity* and in *quality*,
and then it may mean in the latter sense of *low degree*, and
the two words be translated *young men of low degree*.

SERM. me absolutely to say which of the two
 XII. they were, but will argue on a supposition
 of either.

LET them then be as young as you please, but just of age enough to lift out this insult on the prophet. Children are as proper objects of punishment as other persons: For the intent of punishment, is not so much to revenge a fault on the person who has been guilty of it, as to hold out a warning and example to deter others from the same; and it was the nature of the *Jewish* theocracy to visit the iniquities "of the fathers upon the children," especially in the crime of idolatry, as is evident from the second commandment. And what sort of people the inhabitants of *Beth-el* were, we may in some measure judge, from that being the place where *Jeroboam* erected one of the golden calves to draw the children of *Israel* into idolatry; and where he built a house of high places, and "raised an altar to sacrifice unto the calves that he had made, and made priests of the lowest of the people that were not of the sons of *Levi*." And the house of high-places, and the image of the

the golden calf, continued among them no less than three hundred and fifty years, to the days of King *Josiah*, and had then continued, when *Elisha* went to it, upwards of seventy years. S E R M. XII.

MOREOVER, the people of *Beth-el* were so very wicked in this Reign of King *Abab*, that one of them whose name was *Hiel*, had the presumption to rebuild the city of *Jericho*, notwithstanding the curse denounced at the destruction of it in the days of *Joshua*; for we read, that “*Joshua* adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord, that raiseth up and buildeth this city *Jericho*. He shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born; and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates thereof.” And accordingly the historian tells us, thus was this *Hiel* punished; “he laid the foundation thereof in *Abiram* his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son *Segub*.” And this was but little more than twenty years before this affair of the children mocking the prophet.

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FROM

^a *Jos.* vi. 26.

^b *1 Kings* xvi. 34.



FROM these circumstances we may be able to form a very probable conjecture of the genius of the inhabitants of this city; and from the number of children that were got together on the occasion, it may appear a premeditated design in their parents to send them out for the purpose: And if they were indeed *little children*, there is no other probable account to be given of it. But be they *little children*, or *young men*, the affair will appear exceedingly rude, and worthy of punishment. For even supposing there was nothing more in the expression "Go up thou Bald-head," than an insult on *the person* of the Prophet, we shall find it a crime of a very heinous nature.—To begin with the lowest degree in which we can consider it.

1st. HE was an old man; or at least so far advanced in years as to be old in comparison to them; or be he of what age you will, he was greatly their superior. Now it is to be observed, that there was the greatest simplicity and decorum in the manners of the antients. The sacred historians take notice that when *Abraham* was treating with the sons of *Heb* for the cave of *Machpelah*, that he "stood up," and

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“and bowed himself to the people of the
“land, even to the children of *Heth*.”

SERM.
XII.

And the same instance of decency is so often mentioned in the histories of the Patriarchs, the Kings, and Prophets, and in the Acts of the Apostles, that it would swell this discourse to an immoderate length to quote them all. I shall only observe, to show the propriety and importance of such behaviour, that our great poet *Milton*, when he describes *satan* as passing himself on the arch-angel *Uriel* for a young cherub of an inferior order, whose curiosity led him to enquire the way to this earth, then newly created, makes him treat him with the greatest decency and reverence.^b

NOR was this kind of respect only a custom and fashion among the antients, from which they might depart at pleasure, but *Juvenal* tells us, that in the golden age, they looked upon it as a monstrous crime, that deserved to be punished with death itself, if a young man did not treat his seniors with proper marks of honour, how-

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ever

^a Gen. xxiii. 7.

^b Thus said, he turn'd, and *satan* bowing low,
As to superior spirits is wont in heaven,
Where honour due and reverence none neglects,
Took leave.

SERM. ever superior his rank, or more opulent his
 XII. circumstances.*

NAY, in the law of *Moses*, we find it
 an express precept of religion, to "rise up
 "before the hoary head, and honour the
 "face of the old man." *Job* mentions
 it as an aggravating circumstance of his af-
 fliction, "they that are younger than I,
 "have me in derision." And what shows
 the sacredness of the precept just mentioned
 in the law of *Moses*, is the manner of in-
 forcing it, "Thou shalt rise up before the
 "hoary head, and honour the face of the
 "old man; I AM THE LORD," giving
 the most particular significancy and im-
 portance to it, arising not only from the
 nature and reason of the thing itself, but
 from the express command and imme-
 diate appointment of Almighty God. It
 is only owing to our own ill customs,
 the contrary education we give to our
 youth, and the pertness, forwardness, and
 ill manners with which we train them up,
 that any one is led to imagine it so trifling a

* *Credebant hoc grande nefas, & morte punitum
 Si Juvenis vetulo non assurrexerit, & si
 Barbato cuicumque Puer, licet ipse videret
 Plura domi fraga, & majores glandis acervos.*

Juv. Sat. 13. L. 54.

† Lev. xix. 32.

‡ Job xxx. 1.

matter, tho' the fault of these children were nothing more, as some affect to represent it, than merely calling *Elisha* a *Bald-pate*. But this is not all; he was moreover,

SERM.
XII.

2dly, A prophet of the Lord. A character, of all others, the most sacred and venerable; often fallaciously assumed by those who endeavoured to answer the most important ends of government and legislation, in order to draw the higher esteem and regard from the people; before which Kings and Princes themselves have bowed down; to whose admonitions they have paid even a filial obedience; and by whose reproof they have been brought to repentance and humiliation, when no other considerations had the least effect to soften them, or give remorse; and whose persons they have been infinitely afraid to hurt. And *Elisha* was not only a common prophet, but the immediate successor, and endowed with the very spirit of one of the greatest prophets that God Almighty ever honoured the sons of men withal.

To attempt to describe whose character, would give one a kind of inspiration. But language will not afford us more exalted terms to do it in, than those

in

SERM. in which the son of *Syrach* has spoken of
 XII. him. " Then stood up *Elias* the prophet

" as fire, and his word burnt like a lamp.—

" By the word of the Lord he shut up the

" heaven, and also three times brought

" down fire. O *Elias*, how wast thou

" honoured in thy wondrous deeds! And

" who may glory like unto thee! Who

" didst raise up a dead man from death,

" and his soul from the place of the dead

" by the word of the Most High. Who

" broughtest Kings from destruction, and

" honourable men from their bed. Who

" heardst the rebuke of the Lord in *Sinai*,

" and in *Horeb* the judgment of vengeance.

" Who anointedst Kings to take revenge,

" and Prophets to succeed after him. Who

" wast taken up in a whirlwind of fire,

" and in a chariot of fiery horses. Who

" was ordained for reproofs in their times,

" to pacify the wrath of the Lord's judg-

" ment, before it brake forth into fury,

" and to turn the heart of the father unto

" the son, and to restore the tribes of

" *Jacob*."

AND how worthy a successor of this
 great man *Elisba* was, he goes on to de-
 scribe.

scribe. " *Elisha* it was that was covered
 " with a whirlwind : And *Elisha* was
 " filled with his spirit. Whilst he lived,
 " he was not moved with the presence of
 " any prince, neither could any bring him
 " into subjection. No word could over-
 " come him ; and after his death his body
 " prophesied. He did wonders in his life,
 " and at his death were his works mar-
 " vellous.*"

After this, one may appeal to the com-
 mon sense of mankind, whether the crime
 of the children under consideration was not
 of the most heinous nature, contrary to all
 principles of politeness and decency ; and
 whether any parent, unless the rudest and
 most savage in the world, would not think
 it the greatest calamity imaginable to have
 been the instrument of bringing them into
 life. A prophet was treated in those times,
 and would be treated in all civilized coun-
 tries, with the reverence due to a father.
 And there have been countries, though ne-
 ver favoured with revelation, where the
 ingratitude of children to their parents, or
 any insult upon them, would have been
 treated with so great indignation, as to
 erase

* *Eccles.* xlviii. 12, &c.

SERM. erase the very cities where they were born

XII. from the face of the earth. And yet every
 ~~~~~ insult, even upon parents, will appear trifling when compared to this, if we consider farther,

3dly, THAT the affront was not so much to the person of the prophet, as to heaven itself, whose servant he was. For, as I have already observed, the taunt and mockery was at the story of his Master's ascension, "Go up thou Bald-head, Go up thou Bald-head." Which at least was a denial of the fact, and so giving the lie to heaven, or else was the most outrageous blasphemy, ridiculing the wondrous and unsearchable dispensations of God. A crime, infinitely worse than atheism itself. For atheism is barely a denial of the existence of God: But this was controuling his power, calling in question his wisdom and other glorious perfections: It was the most obstinate adherence to idolatry, the boldest refusal to be converted to him, and answer the end of all the dispensations of revelation. By which means his designs were frustrated, and the schemes both of his providence and grace totally subverted. Which is in fact a complication of all the crimes it is possible

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ble to be guilty of. And it was a prodigious aggravation of all this, that they had a college of prophets in the very town these children came out of, where *Elisba's* character was well known, and acknowledged, and his master's ascension had been foretold. S E R M. XII.

It is no objection to all this, that they are expressly called in the text *little children*, who were not capable of any guilt, not being come to years of thought and discretion, nor educated properly as they should be; and that I have already said, it might have been a premeditated design in their parents, or other people of the town, to send them out for the purpose. For guilt, and very great guilt too, there certainly was somewhere or other; and the punishment was such, as in the best manner answered the general end of punishment in the government of this world.

If they were not really little children, but young men, and had indeed themselves any guilt, they were properly objects of punishment. If they were but little children, without any degree of guilt, they were then only *sufferers*, and instruments in the hands of God to hold out a warning

to

SERM. to all future ages who should hear their  
 XII. story, against such rudeness and disrespect  
 to their superiors, and against such contemptuous disobedience to God and his messengers. And how admirably it does answer that end, I leave to the experience of every orderly and well-regulated family. We might as well object to infants being subject to pain, or sickness, or any kind of death, as to these children suffering in this case. Which would in effect be to controul the scheme of Providence, and take the government of the world out of its hands. And for the same reason, we are no judges of the severity of the punishment; but ought, with the greatest modesty and deference, to leave every thing of such kind to the divine wisdom, which can direct to nothing but what is in the exactest proportion, and the most perfectly righteous. But surely, very different reflections might be made upon it than what some have made, when we consider, what has been already mentioned, that the antients looked on the crime before us, as a capital one.

From all which it will appear, to be the most unreasonable thing in the world to charge the prophet, with violence and fury,

and

and weakly falling into a great passion, in *curfing* these impious ill-educated children. SERM. XII.

For though *curfing* may seem to us a very shocking thing; the meaning of it in such a case as this, is no more than *pronouncing sentence* upon them, which was one part of the prophetic office: As is evident from what *Balak* says to *Balaam*, when he sent for him to come and curse his enemies; "For I wot, *says he*, that he whom thou cursest, is cursed, and he whom thou bledest, is blessed." And when his anger was kindled at *Balaam's* acting the very contrary part to what he expected, *Balaam* replies, "If *Balak* would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord to do less or more." And the text expressly tells us, *Elisba* did this *in the name of the Lord*, i. e. by the immediate direction and inspiration of God, whose orders he durst not disobey, nor the fitness of them durst he dispute. And the event, "the two she-bears coming out of the wood, and tearing forty and two children of them," shows that it was by the immediate direction and inspiration of God, and without any

<sup>a</sup> Num. xxii. 6.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. ver. 18.

SERMON. any mixture of a bitter and criminal zeal.

XII. But indeed, if inspiration had been out of the question, it had been much too late to have heard this insult on the story of his master's ascension, being such an awful and extraordinary interposition of heaven without the highest indignation. And those who call *that* an unreasonable and undue passion, show, that they have read the history with great prejudice, or at least with monstrous ignorance and inattention.

In all lights, the severity executed was in consequence of idolatry, and the sed principles the people of this place had been trained up in. Now the *ordinary* consequences of ill education are natural, necessary, and unavoidable; and by no means chargeable on the scheme of Providence. Such are crazy and corrupt habits of body, communicated by the vice, extravagance, and debauchery of parents; poverty; loss of estates they were legal heirs to; prejudice; ignorance, and vicious habits of mind. And these have not only been urged by the best *moralists*, as forcible motives why parents should themselves avoid the vices productive of them, and take the nicest care in forming the minds of children; but the most



prudent law-givers have thought there were S A A M.  
sufficient reasons for inflicting severities on XII.  
children, in order to work on the natural  
affections of parents, to deter them from  
practices which will bring evil and mischief  
on their offspring, as well as on them-  
selves.

THIS seems to be the reason why *Virgil*  
places infants, who came to untimely death,  
at the entrance of the infernal regions, as  
they may be supposed to have perished by  
the neglect of their parents.\* And in the  
very country we live in, self-murder, trea-  
son, and all capital offences forfeit their  
possessions, which otherwise would descend  
to their children and posterity. And this  
is certainly as just and reasonable in its own  
nature, as it is to annex hereditary advan-  
tages and honours to glorious exploits, loy-  
alty, and right behaviour. The thing to be  
considered, is not the particular persons  
that suffer, or that are rewarded, but the  
general good, and utility to the whole body

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\* *Continuo auditae voces, vagitus & ingens,  
Infantumque animas flentes in limine primo:  
Quos dulcis vitæ exsternit, & ab ubere raptos,  
Abstulit atra dies, & funera mersit acerbo.*

*Eneid. L. 6. l. 426.*

SERM. of mankind. And this is particularly the

XII. reason why, as I have already observed in the *Jewish theocracy*, the iniquity of the parents was visited upon the children, especially in the crime of idolatry.

In extraordinary cases then, why may not God Almighty with as much justice show an extraordinary resentment? The fact now before us cannot be paralleled in the common behaviour of mankind: Nor in the whole history of the *Jewish* revolt against him, and inclination to idolatry. And their general proneness to it was severely punished, and ended at last after many captivities, in the final dissolution of their state. But in no period of it were they so presumptuous as in this reign of King *Ahab*; nor in any part of the reign, so presumptuous as in this particular instance. And as the King himself was greatly inclined to idolatry, and married to Queen *Jezebel*, the most audacious patron of it that ever lived, there was no likelihood of any laws being put in execution against it, unless God Almighty should as we see he did, take it into his own hands. And certainly "the two she-bears" tearing them," in the manner mentioned

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in the text, was as proper as any other in the interposition of heaven whatsoever, and as little liable to objection.

THE most immediate punishment from heaven, seems to us to be by lightning, and strikes the beholders with a most awful amazement. But how often are the innocent struck dead by it? And the enablers in this case, would impute it to a natural cause. And though the historian does not tell us, in so many words, that the bears were appointed by providence for the purpose, yet is it plainly implied in the form of expression, and is the most obvious thought that can arise to any serious mind. Nor would the majestic simplicity with which the scripture-stories are related, allow the author of this to be more circumstantial; as he could not but think, the shocking and outrageous rudeness of the fact, would, as soon as ever mentioned, be thoroughly abhorred and detested. And the prodigious fierceness and strength of these creatures, especially when enraged with hunger, or deprived of their young, cannot be doubted of, when we find it the strongest image of fury and desolation the eastern writers could form. "Let a bear robbed

SERM. "of her whelps," says *Solomon*, *Prov.* 17. 12.

XII.

"man, rather than a fool in his folly."

And in the prophecy of *Hofa*, "I will meet

"them as a bear bereaved of her whelps

"and will rent the cawl of their heart."

Add to this, or any other circumstance

we can imagine, that they were the im-

mediate instruments of divine vengeance

and then neither the strength they exerted

nor the carnage and slaughter they made

will appear at all incredible, being in the

hands of omnipotence. But notwithstanding

this tremendous judgment of heaven

so obstinate and hardened were the idol-

trous *Israelites*, that, as the son of *Syrah*

adds to the two characters already given of

*Elijah* and *Elisha*, "For all this the peo-

"ple repented not, neither departed they

"from their sins, until they were spoiled

"and carried out of their land, and were

"scattered through all the earth."

THAT what has been said may not ap-

pear a mere matter of speculation, and cu-

riosity, I proceed.

II. To enquire into the moral uses

are to make of this part of sacred history

\* *Prov.* xvii. 12.

b *Hof.* xiii. 8.

c *Eccles.* 48.



as it holds out a warning to parents, and other guardians and instructors, not to give children bad education, nor prompt them on to, nor set them the example of bad practices, but to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

THE time is too far spent to enter into any thing like a system of education; I must confine myself to a few observations on it, naturally arising from the subject we have been discoursing of.

THE intent of God Almighty in establishing the relation between parents and children, was not merely that parents might be the instruments of bringing them into life, suckling them in their infancy, and teaching them trades, and other arts of getting their daily bread. An immediate creation, like that of the first pair of mankind, which would be as easy to him; instinct, and a much lower share of reason than we enjoy, might have answered those purposes. No; the intent of this relation is to promote the moral happiness of mankind; to give parents the pleasure of training up their children in principles of honour and virtue, in order

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to

See a man to be answering the ends; and enjoying the benefits of their creation; and to pain them out the way to shame and avoid every thing that would interrupt the intention of the Creator in giving them existence, and placing them in this state of trial and probation for higher and more noble periods of being.

The experience of all ages has shown how weak the human mind is in its infancy, how susceptible of vice, and ill impressions, and prone to be influenced by bad examples. On the other hand, it is ductile, tractable, and easily moulded to right and proper behaviour: Inasmuch that it has been likened to white paper, on which may be wrote either good, or bad. *Solomon* says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." And some excellent authors give it as their opinion, that no one is born without capacity, and that consequently ignorance, and vice are owing to mismanagement at first. From which we see, what an important relation that of a parent is, how much depends on a good education, and what scenes of mischief

chief and woe may be said in a bad one; **S. 14.**  
 in short, that the happiness, or misery, both **XII.**  
 of time, and eternity depend in a great  
 measure upon it. And nothing can be  
 more absurd than the pretence, that to  
 train them up in any kind of principles of  
 religion and virtue, is only to prejudice  
 them therein, and bias them in favour of  
 them.

In answer to this, I appeal to the natu-  
 ral affection of parents, what remorse of  
 mind they must feel, if their children acted  
 wrong, or became in any wise unhappy,  
 in consequence of their neglect. Put the  
 case, according to the common notions of  
 education, that for want of the provi-  
 sion parents ought to make for them, or  
 training them up in the knowledge of  
 some useful and ingenuous art or science,  
 they should starve, perish, and come to un-  
 timely death.—But what are starving, pe-  
 rishing, or coming to untimely death in  
 this world, compared to “the second death,”  
 or to “everlasting destruction from the pre-  
 sence of the Lord, and the glory of his  
 power?” Why is it not as reasonable  
 to leave them to themselves, without any

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pre-

<sup>a</sup> Rev. xxi. 8.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Thes. i. 9.

S. P. A. M. preceptors or tutors, to find out the first principles of arts and sciences, and all the improvements upon them, as to find out principles of virtue and religion, and get into a proper train of thinking? In all these cases, the advantage is, to be directed by the experience and examples of past ages, and to make the matter, whatever it be, short, and more easy to be come at. Without which, a liberal education has no pre-eminence over that of a savage in a desert; or a polite education over that of a peasant. And yet these very men search out the most skilful masters and artists, to teach their children — it is almost beneath the dignity of the pulpit, to say what. And they would think it madness, and that their expence was ill bestowed, if they were to undo, or contradict whatever these artists were employed to polish them in.

If then the business of parents is, as I have said, to train up their children to virtue and moral happiness; is it not monstrous, and the height of madness, nay the very imitation of the devil himself, to set them bad examples, and to teach them to blaspheme the name of God! or, like the children before us, outrageously to ridicule his works,



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works, and the wonderful operations of **St. M.**  
his power! Can it be expected, that they **XII.**  
will reverence his holy name, or stand in  
awe of a Being, whom they hear their pa-  
rents every day taking the most shameful  
liberties with; or pray to him for a bless-  
ing, when they hear those who have the  
care of them, every moment call on him  
to curse themselves and all they converse  
with!

It is an excellent saying of one of the  
antients, that "great reverence is due to  
"children," meaning, that one should take  
the utmost care of every thing one says  
or does before them.—If the children men-  
tioned in the text, were not sent out by  
their parents on purpose to commit the in-  
sult on the Prophet and the God of *Israel*,  
they had undoubtedly heard either them,  
or other persons, mock at the story of *Eli-  
jah's* ascension, and speak of it in a manner  
that they thought would justify any rude-  
ness whatsoever. And if this was not done  
by the parents themselves, but by other per-  
sons, and the immediate rudeness of *young  
men of low degree*, it will teach us still an  
additional lesson; and that is, that the  
greatest care should be taken of the com-  
pany

SERM. pany that youth are allowed to keep. For,  
 XII. after the most nice and prudent conduct of  
 a parent to form their minds, and keep  
 them pure from every stain; wicked,  
 mean, and vulgar associates may undo  
 every thing he has been about, may erase  
 every principle of modesty and virtue, and  
 imprint in their minds the foulest charac-  
 ters of debauchery, profaneness, and every  
 thing that is reprobate. And no one can  
 doubt of, or wonder at this, who observes  
 how apt evil examples, and the commu-  
 nication of those they love, are, to taint  
 the morals even of persons come to years  
 of discretion, in spite of their better know-  
 ledge, and in contradiction to the princi-  
 ples they themselves espouse. One can  
 scarcely walk the streets, or go into what  
 are called the politest assemblies without  
 seeing this: And the very *schools of the*  
*Prophets* are a melancholy confirmation  
 of it.

BUT the more immediate lesson the sub-  
 ject I have been discoursing of, points out  
 to us, is, to season the minds of children  
 with modesty, decency, and a proper re-  
 spect to their superiors: Principles, of all  
 others

others the most apt to mould them to virtue and honour. For by superiors, I do not mean superiors in rank and fortune, tho' a proper decency is due even to them; but in honourable age, true experience of things, and characters really venerable and sacred. This will induce them to receive admonition with ease, and reproof with deference and submission; instead of that turbulency of spirit that rises in rebellion against all instruction, and renders the mind like a frightful desert, or a savage wilderness, rather than like a well-cultivated and fruitful garden; which few will like to undergo the toil and sweat of endeavouring to cultivate and polish, till at length it becomes too rank for the most assiduous labour to break up or manure.

WITH such respect, they will naturally be led to emulate the great and good qualities which are the foundation of reverence. They will need few laboured lectures about virtue; but will be, as it were, inspired to the practice of it, by the example of those whom they are accustomed thus to love and regard. For, I hope it will not be thought offending against the precept I am inculcating, if I take the liberty

SERMON. berry of reminding the aged, that the reason of the reverence due to them, is not the number of days, and nights, and years they have told; but the wisdom, prudence, contempt of this world and fitness for another, which they are supposed to acquire in them. Just as a man may be supposed to gain perfection in any science, by the instruction, and attention to the practice of a skilful master, more than by his own search and enquiry. As the author of the wisdom of *Salomon* says, "Honourable age" is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years. But wisdom is the grey hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age." Thus the righteous that are dead, shall condemn the ungodly, which are living; and youth that is soon perfected, the many years and old age of the unrighteous.<sup>b</sup> Let me add, that some of the *Jewish* rabbins paraphrase the precept I have mentioned, of honouring "the father of the old man, provided he be wise."

WOULD to God, those parents who encourage the boldness, rudeness, and ill-manners

<sup>a</sup> *Wisd.* iv. 8, &c.  
*Synopsis Criticorum.*

<sup>b</sup> *Ib.* 16.

<sup>c</sup> See *Paul's*



manners of their children, or a haughty, insolent behaviour even to the poor and indigent, to people reduced from better and more flourishing circumstances, and to their very servants, would consider this! And what misery, distress, and inability to help themselves, if ever they should be reduced (and who knows what a day may bring forth!) may be the consequence! The history of every country, and the experience of every day, show how many such persons come to be, if I may so call it, food for untimely death.

On this account, the children we have been discoursing of, felt the immediate and sudden resentment of heaven. But though the resentment be ever so long deferred; nay, though it be never shown at all in this world; though no human laws be put in execution against them, nor she-bears out of the wood sent to destroy them: Yet in the conclusion, will they be delivered over to a Being much less merciful, ending in everlasting torments with the devil and his angels.

## SERMON XII.

The difficulties attending repentance, an argument against vice.

HEB. xii. 17.

*For he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

SERM.  
XIII.

**T**HE difficulties attending repentance arising from the nature and obstinacy of habits, expressed in that passage of the Prophet, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil," though far from a discouragement to repentance, or the least motive to despair, are a strong argument against entering on any vicious practices. But I shall choose to treat of these difficulties from the passage I have

<sup>a</sup> Jer. xiii. 23.

read,

read, because it carries the argument still farther; and shows, that however the repentance of the mind may be sincere, and accepted with God, the consequences of our vices may be such, as, whatever may be our desires and inclinations, it may be impossible for us ever to redress. I shall therefore blend the two arguments together, and make such observations on both, as may deter us from wicked practices: But that no one who has been guilty of wicked practices, may from thence be frightened from endeavouring to repent; I shall wrest both the passages I have mentioned, from any interpretations that may lead to such a purpose.

THE history of *Esau*, who is said in the text to have "found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears," is this.

HE was the eldest son of *Isaac* and *Rebecca*, whom God had graciously distinguished from the other families of the earth, by a promise to their father *Abraham*, that among their posterity the Messiah should be born: Which is the reason of the long, and seemingly tedious, genealogies in the sacred books. On this account, *Esau* ought

S E R M. ought to have esteemed his birth-right sacred, and preserved it as such, that in his line the Messiah might come. But being, as the writer of this epistle calls him, "a profane person," that is, one who slighted and undervalued sacred things, he despised his birth-right, and sold it to his younger brother *Jacob*, and bound the contract with an oath, "for one morsel of meat."<sup>a</sup>

It would take up too much of our time, for indeed it would be itself the subject of a whole discourse, to enter into a discussion of the nature of his crime.<sup>b</sup> From what has been already said, it will appear, to have been as much contemning, and contradicting the purport of providence, which is always founded in truth and righteousness, as theft, or murder, or any other disobedience to its laws whatsoever; entirely subverting, and confounding the relation in which

<sup>a</sup> *Heb. xii. 16.*

<sup>b</sup> The *Jewish Rabbins*, and after them *Grotius* and others say, that *Eſau's* despising his birth-right was criminal, because in the patriarchal times the honour of the priesthood always went in the eldest line of every family, *Exod. xxiv. 5.* But, though this be true, I think the reason I have given is much more consistent with the scheme of revelation, and the one grand connected plan observable through the whole sacred books. However, it was exceedingly criminal in either case.



which God had placed him, than which a more shocking idea of vice cannot be given you.

S. 2. 2. XIII.

AND accordingly, sometime after, we find the resentment providence expressed, and the sad consequences he himself felt from it. For his father *Isaac*, notwithstanding a partiality he had always shown for him as the elder born, by a prophetick spirit a little before his death, transferred the promised blessing and advantage of the family to *Jacob*: And though, through a paternal weakness, sorry for it afterwards, is inspired to persist in it, and confirm it in despite of *Esau's* tears, and all the arts he practised on his father's fondness.

For which reason commentators universally, and that with the greatest justice, interpret the text, not of *Esau's* own repentance, but of his father's, whom he could not by all his supplications and tears, induce to repent, or change his mind and recede from what he had done. But which ever it relates to, the inference to our present purpose will be the same; and it will be an argument equally strong against vice, whether we thereby bring upon ourselves incurable habits of wickedness;

X

or

SERM. or bring ourselves, or others, into mighty  
XIII. and irretrievable mischiefs.

WE have seen, and heard, and read of men so extravagantly wicked, that though they have been thoroughly convinced of the error of their ways, it has been with infinite difficulty, if they have been at all brought to abstain from them. Which unhappiness the apostle represents in a very lively manner, when he speaks of them as if they were "BY NATURE children of wrath;"<sup>a</sup> and as if they were as unable to help themselves as a lifeless corpse,<sup>b</sup> being DEAD in sins.<sup>c</sup> And all wise moralists have in all ages, and in all languages, represented habits like the bending and directing young plants and trees, which no art or violence could be able to correct, when once strengthened, and firmly knit together. Or if they suppose such habits may be changed, they represent it like turning the course of a river and the like; which must be done by infinite labour, and requires a prodigious length of time.

As it is my design in this discourse previously to dissuade men from vice, as well

<sup>a</sup> Eph. ii. 3.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. ver. 5.

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as to endeavour to reform them from it, SERM.

I shall,

XIII.

I. SHOW some of the principal difficulties attending repentance. And,

II. DRAW some inferences, and point out the properest methods to be taken, in consequence of the several observations that will be made.

I. I SHALL show some of the principal difficulties attending repentance. And,

1<sup>st</sup>, HABITS of wickedness drown, or at least corrupt the reason, so that it renders men either insensible to remonstrance and reproof; or else, supplies them with false arguments to encounter with what we say, and to support, and defend themselves in their bad practices. Though at first they may startle at the thought of any vice; the examples of others, and particularly persons in high life, or in any eminent station, will too soon reconcile them to the practice of it: And when once they are so inclined, it is no difficulty, especially for persons of wit and spirit, to find out fallacious reasons to defend themselves. — For instance: The

SERMON. religion we profess, in the most express  
 XIII. terms condemns fornication,\* and every  
 violation of the laws of chastity. But a  
 little observation on the world will show  
 us, how boldly men indulge themselves in  
 the foulest impurities; calling them by  
 names amiable and endearing, as if they  
 were dictated by nature, and principles of  
 social virtue. And say what you will to  
 them, in opposition to all this, of the pre-  
 cepts of christianity expressly, and in the  
 strongest terms forbidding it; of the good  
 order of society, hereby most fatally broken  
 in upon; the rational and sweetest happi-  
 ness of conjugal fidelity, in the most out-  
 rageous manner violated; and the virgin  
 charms of modesty stained and sullied  
 thereby: They will first endeavour to per-  
 suade you out of your sentiments; or if,  
 by strength of reason you put them to the  
 blush, represent you as a hypocrite, de-  
 cline your conversation, or put you to the  
 violence of avoiding theirs. And thus by  
 hardening one another in their vices, they  
 render an attempt towards their reforma-  
 tion almost impracticable. Or,

\* 1 Cor. vi. 18. Eph. v. 3. 1 Thess. iv. 3.



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2dly, If you should indeed convince **SERM.**  
their judgments, bring them to some sense **XIII.**  
of remorse, and perhaps to resolutions of  
amendment; the first companion in their  
former iniquities they meet with, the first  
temptation, or intoxicating glass, may un-  
do all, set their old false reasonings afloat  
again, and draw them into a relapse more  
dangerous and fatal than their first com-  
mitted offences. The story of many of the  
unhappy, and greatly pitiable wretches,  
who render their lives a necessary sacrifice  
to the laws of their country, show this in  
the most affecting light. All which de-  
monstrates the great advantage of an early  
piety, and the barbarity of those inhuman  
parents, who take no care of the principles  
and morals of their children; but suffer  
them to raise an enormous structure of vice,  
every material of which must be again de-  
molished, and quite a new building erect-  
ed, " fitly framed together, growing unto  
" an holy temple in the Lord,"<sup>a</sup> before  
they can enjoy the least rational happiness.

3dly, BUT even supposing them to reco-  
ver their reason, to return to a true sense  
of things, and a real, uninterrupted, amend-

X 3

ment

<sup>a</sup> Eph. ii. 21.

310      Difficulties attending repentance,  
S E R M. ment of life; yet, thirdly, it may be, and  
XIII. often is, utterly impossible to remedy the  
ill consequence of their vices. In the case  
of *Esau* before us, he never could upon  
any account recover his birth-right; "for  
" we know how that afterwards, when  
" he would have inherited the blessing, he  
" was rejected, for he found no place of  
" repentance, though he sought it care-  
" fully with tears." It was irrecoverably  
made over to his brother *Jacob*, from  
whom sprang all the twelve tribes, to whose  
families the birth of the Messiah was con-  
fined; And the *Edomites*, *Esau's* posterity,  
though a great and mighty people, were  
secluded from the blessings to accrue from  
" the promised seed;" and had no inhe-  
ritance in the land of *Canaan*, till they con-  
quered a part of it, during the *Babylonish*  
captivity. His " seeking the blessing care-  
fully with tears," showed a sense of the  
value of what he had lost, and a remorse  
for his crime. Nor is it likely, so excellent  
a patriarch as *Isaac* would have had so great  
an affection for him as we have seen, had  
he not discovered in him, in other respects,  
many good qualities and dispositions. That  
he had some, is evident from his history.

His

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His duty to, and great care of his father, *Serm.*  
in providing him with venison, "such as XIII.  
"his soul loved;" and the sudden abate-  
ment of his wrath against his brother *Jacob*,  
whom he looked upon in the light of "a  
"supplanter," after *Jacob's* return from  
*Padan-Aran*; and the blessing, though in-  
ferior, which his father even by inspiration  
bestowed upon him,<sup>a</sup> are proofs of it.

We have other instances of the same  
kind in holy writ. *Moses*, "like unto  
"whom there never rose any Prophet,"  
was not permitted to enter into the  
*Land of Promise*, but only to behold it  
with his eyes from mount *Nebo*, as a pu-  
nishment for his rash anger, so exceedingly  
criminal in a man of his singular and ex-  
emplary meekness. *David*, notwithstand-  
ing his exemplary penitence, could by no  
means prevail with the Almighty to spare  
the life of his Son, whom the wife of *Uriah*  
*the Hittite* bare to him in adultery. How  
many miseries did *Jacob* himself endure in  
his exile, in consequence of the lie by  
which he obtained the blessing from his  
brother *Esau*? Inasmuch that he tells *Pha-*

X 4

raab

<sup>a</sup> *Gen.* xxvii. 3. <sup>b</sup> *ib.* ver. 36.  
ver. 39, 40.

<sup>c</sup> *ib.*



SERM. *raab*, at his latter end, that "few and  
 XIII. "evil had been the days of the years of  
 "his life."

WE may observe the same every hour in common life, among persons who have squandered away their possessions; wasted their health and strength in riot and debauchery; brought ruin and incurable diseases on their offspring; or deprived their neighbours of their properties, or their lives. Sincere repentance will undoubtedly reconcile all these to God: But their estates, their health and constitutions, and the flourishing condition which they have prevented, or from which they have reduced their fellow-creatures, are gone for ever. To which may be added in some cases, a melancholy habit of distraction, or a more melancholy habit of despair.

4thly, BUT still farther, where many of these inconveniences might be remedied by the kindness and compassion of those around us; how many difficulties may be thrown in on their parts? The rigorous and censorious will in all probability be utterly inexorable, impute the fairest marks of repentance to hypo-



an argument against vice.

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hypocrisy and pretence, or at best to the SERM.  
feeling of misery, which, they will cry, XIII.  
is good enough for us, and we may take it  
for our pains. Men hardened in wicked-  
ness will have little notion that there can  
be any such thing as repentance. And even  
among the upright, such is the imperfec-  
tion of human nature, we may find great  
incredulity, and a sort of prudence and cau-  
tion, which may defeat all hope of relief  
and kindness from them: And the truly  
candid and generous rarely have it in their  
power to do any thing more than to sigh,  
and lament the want of charity in their  
neighbours.

BESIDES all this, there are people in the  
world, who are virtuous, if I may so say,  
only by contrast; like the pharisee in the  
parable, "God, I thank thee, that I am  
"not as other men are:" And it will be  
their interest to keep every one they can  
triumph over, in the situation he is in, for  
the advantage of comparing themselves  
with him, or, in familiar stile, *to set them-  
selves off.*

To which let me observe, that there are  
others, who have no evil, nay, perhaps, have

a

SERMON. a very friendly disposition, who merely by  
 XIII. indiscretion, and the intemperance of  
 their tongues, may give ill impressions even  
 of these they attempt to serve, and create  
 them enemies who may endeavour to  
 plunge them into still deeper distress; or at  
 least prevent all possible recovery out of  
 that they are in.

5thly, WHICH, in the last place, may  
 distract and perplex the mind to so great a  
 degree, as to render it unfit for religious  
 contemplations, and deprive it of many of  
 the soft and gentle dispositions of virtue.  
 The very greatest unhappiness that can pos-  
 sibly befall a rational creature, formed after  
 the image of God, and the END of whose  
 creation as virtue, moral perfection, and  
 happiness!

HAVING thus shown some of the  
 principal difficulties attending repentance;  
 not with the least view to deter any con-  
 trite sinner from endeavouring to bring it  
 to perfection, as you will presently see by  
 the charitable and salutary advice I shall  
 give them, but in order to persuade to an  
 early piety, and to make men sensible how  
 exceedingly cruel it is to themselves to

ven-

an argument against vice.

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venture on vicious practices; and to per-  
suade them to retreat in time, and not to  
suffer any such practices to grow into ha-  
bits; I proceed,

II. To draw some inferences, and point  
out the properest methods to be taken, in  
consequence of the several observations  
which have been made.

LET me begin with a serious and pathe-  
tick address to parents, to keep the nicest  
eye on the dispositions, and morals of their  
children; to make this their chief care, and  
every circumstance relating to their passage  
through this world subservient only thereto.  
Let them not by their own luxury and  
ambition, inflame the passions of their chil-  
dren; or by avarice and sordid actions,  
give them a mean and low way of think-  
ing, tearing up compassion and softness of  
disposition by the roots; but be careful to  
teach them what is the real design of their  
creation, the relation they stand in to God  
their heavenly Father; and the connection  
this present state of trial and probation has  
with the perfection of the future state, and  
with "the glory that shall be revealed."  
And let them never forget to inflame them  
with



SERMON. with a real dignity of soul, which may set  
 XIII. them above the base practices of vice, and  
 secure them against all the pains of repentance. This would in truth be a liberal education; whereas every thing else only tends to fetter the mind, either to the world, or to sin, and renders it a real slave.

LET me, in the next place, exhort young persons themselves, to be upon their guard against the evil examples even of their parents: To "remember their Creator in the  
 "days of their youth, before the evil days  
 "come, and the years draw nigh, when  
 "they shall say they have no pleasure."  
 Let me entreat them to make the earliest observations they can, as *Horace* tells us his father taught him to do, on the miseries, and fatal effects of vice among their neighbours and companions: To take the most deli-

*Eccles. xii. 1.*

*Insuevit pater optimus hoc mi,*

*Ut fugerem exemplis vitiorum quæque notando.*

*Cum mi hortaretur, parce, frugaliter, atque*

*Viverem uti contentus eo, quod mi ipse parasset:*

*Nonne vides, Albi ut malè vivas filius? utique*

*Barrus inops? Magnum documentum, ne patriam rem*

*Perdere quis velit. A turpi meretricis amore*

*Cum deterreret: Sestiani dissimilis sis.*

*Ne sequerer mœchæ, concessâ cum venere uti*

*Posses, Deprensi non bella est fama Treboni,*

*Aiebat.*

*Hor. Sat. 4. Lib. 1.*

Here



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SERMON.

XIII.

delicate care of the companions with whom they associate; giving credit to the maxim of the wise man, "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." And chiefly, let them be assured, that their tender years are no security against the dart of death; but that God hath left the hour of it uncertain, that none, not even the youngest, may defer their preparation for it; and that if they set out in vitious courses, they, as well as those of riper years, can have no dependance that they shall have "space given them to repent." But if they set out in the road of virtue, let them believe the experience of every one who has travelled in it, that its "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace."

LET me be allowed with modesty to observe, the great usefulness of the sacred office, and the humanity, as well as dignity of the character of the ministers of the gospel of *Jesus*; the business of whose lives

it

Here I cannot forbear recommending, as the most useful pieces of antiquity, for the early employment of the minds of younger students, the inimitable *tablature* of *Cebes* the Philosopher, and *the judgment of Hercules* by *Prodicus*: The finest remains of ancient moral painting in the world.

\* *Prov.* xiii. 20.

† *Prov.* iii. 17.

# 318 Difficulties attending repentance,

SERM. it is, by proper reasoning and remonstrance,

XIII. to "save souls from death, and to prevent

~ "a multitude of sins." And may I be forgiven, if I put my brethren in mind, that the most generous part of our duty, is to save men from the burthen of repentance; and that it is much more charitable to prevent, than to reclaim them?

LET me observe farther; the necessary duty in all christians of setting good examples of virtue; rendering it so amiable as to make men ashamed of not conforming to its laws, alluring them from their vices, and not suffering sin to rest upon them, if by any means they can prevent it.

WHAT I have hitherto said, will certainly add great and painful remorse to the convictions of every awakened sinner: But it is a remorse which I will endeavour to convert to their benefit and final happiness, by pointing out to them the properest methods they can take.

LET their first enquiry then be, how far vice has taken root in their hearts: Whether the fibres of it have but just be-

gan to dilate, so that they may be eradicated

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S. A. M.

XIII.

eated with little or no difficulty, or who-  
ther they have penetrated deep and wide,  
and are so firmly established as to require a  
vast strength to pluck them up. If, hap-  
pily, they have made but small advances in  
wickedness; let them immediately stop  
short, and reflect on all the horrid conse-  
quences of evil habits, the rational happi-  
ness they destroy, and the solid miseries  
they bring with them.

LET them view vice in all its deformity;  
heighten the hideous picture with every  
horror-giving colour they can throw upon  
it; till they are terrified from proceeding  
on another step, and are reconverted to  
their former innocence. And in order to  
prevent a return, let them never cease to  
ponder over the dreadful precipice they  
have escaped, and the fatal miseries they  
had like to have been plunged in. Let  
their escape be the subject of their daily  
thanksgiving to God; and let them give  
full scope to all the pleasures they can, and  
ought to derive from it.

WHERE habits of wickedness are grown  
old and obstinate, the difficulty, it must  
be owned, will be infinitely greater: But  
still far from unsurmountable. For which



# 320 Difficulties attending repentance,

S E E M. reason, the best advice to be given to unhappy persons, labouring under them, is, at all times to resist and suppress every thought of despair, either of the mercies of God, or of their own reformation.

BOTH reason and revelation do so abundantly declare the merciful nature of God; and the express design of our blessed Saviour's errand into the world, was so apparently, as he himself tells us, "Not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" and the invitations to accept of mercy, are so kind, pressing, and affectionate: That it would be the rudest contradiction of the most sacred truths, and the highest affront to the solemn declarations of God Almighty, to entertain the least doubt of his readiness to forgive, provided always the repentance be sincere.

NOT to attempt to prove this at present from principles of reason; I will tell you what he himself, in condescension to our infirmities, has vouchsafed to attest even with an oath, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live."

WHAT

<sup>a</sup> Matt. ix. 13.

<sup>b</sup> Ezek. xxxiii. 11.



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What is it possible for mortal man to **S E R M.**  
add to confirm the truth of this! But I **XIII.**  
will repeat a passage from the Prophet  
*Isaiab*; only for the sake of the strong  
terms it is expressed in, " Let the wicked  
" forsake his way; and the unrighteous  
" man his thoughts; and let him return  
" unto the Lord, and he will have **MERCY**  
" upon him, and to our God, for he will  
" **ABUNDANTLY** pardon."—To which let  
me subjoin our Saviour's declaration, " Him  
" that cometh unto me, I will **IN NO**  
" **WISE** cast out : <sup>b</sup> " And the apostle's  
sense of the scheme of the gospel, " God  
" would have **ALL MEN TO BE SAVED**,  
" and to come unto the knowledge of the  
" truth."<sup>c</sup>

**AFTER** these solemn declarations of the  
Holy Spirit of God, the most pathetic ad-  
dress human eloquence is capable of fram-  
ing, would appear cold and insipid.—All  
that can be done, is with the utmost ten-  
derness and compassion to exhort, and ear-  
nestly to entreat every penitent sinner, to  
give them a due and calm consideration,  
dismissing his fears, and attending to  
them with all the seriousness his present

<sup>a</sup> *Isa.* lv. 7.    <sup>b</sup> *John* vi. 37.    <sup>c</sup> *1 Tim.* ii. 4.

Y

affect-

SIN affecting interests require; and this, though

XIII. it be in the immediate article of death; no  
 a single moment being precluded from  
 hope of divine, unbounded pity and com-  
 passion.

BUT in the strength of life, let no  
 thought of the impossibility of a reforma-  
 tion be allowed to obtrude itself. The pas-  
 sage I mentioned in the beginning of this  
 discourse, "Can the *Ethiopian* change his  
 skin, or the leopard his spots," cannot  
 be the least discouragement; as it is evi-  
 dently no more than a *similitude*, which can  
 admit of no doctrine to be raised from it.  
 It does indeed strongly express a difficulty;  
 and carries with it to King *Jeboachin*, and  
 Queen *Nebushta* his mother, to whom it is  
 addressed, a very severe sarcasm; implying,  
 that they had suffered their wickedness to  
 rise to the most inveterate habit, even so  
 great, as to bring on the *Babylonish* capti-  
 vity: But has no reference to the com-  
 mon condition of human nature. Nor  
 could the Prophet intend by it, that any  
 penitent sinner is incapable of reformation,  
 because that would be utterly inconsistent  
 with the whole scheme of mercy and sal-

vation

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vation that has been mentioned: And there S E R M.  
are *similitudes* in the scripture equally **XIII.**

strong, on the side I am engaged on,

"Though your sins be as scarlet, I will

"make them as wool, though they be as

"crimson, they shall be as white as

"snow."\* Set the one similitude against

the other, and I will take upon me to say,

the bias, on the scheme of revelation, will

always be on the side of mercy.

Nor does the text, "He found no

"place of repentance, though he sought it

"carefully with tears," give a greater discour-

agement to our endeavours; because it has

been already made appear to relate only to

the temporal consequences of vice; not to

the spiritual, or eternal state and condition.

But whatever difficulties may arise on this

head, with regard to the infirmities of hu-

man nature; the perfections of God, and

the whole scheme of revelation, give the

greatest hopes of divine aid and assistance,

wherever it may be necessary or proper, on

condition, for I must always repeat it, the

repentance on our part be sincere, and we

not backward in any thing in our own

power.

Y 2

How-

\* *Isaiab i. 18.*

## Difficulties attending repentance,

HOWEVER, as I am earnestly solicitous to compleat the good work I have been endeavouring at in this discourse, I will propose one mean, which if men would be serious in the use of it, could not possibly fail: And that is, to keep it always uppermost in their minds, that God is as certainly present with them, though invisible to every mortal eye, as any other being whom they stand in awe of, and in whose company they could not possibly give a loose to any impure action. Nothing but forgetting this most infallible principle of truth, could suffer us to deviate into vice. But this is a subject I have not time to consider in its full force; can therefore only hint it, and must refer the farther consideration of it to your own thoughts.

I SHALL only advise at present, to take the most prudent methods, according to their own complexions and tempers, to prevent a relapse. The particular means of doing this, are not easy to point out. The least indulgence to pleasure, and association with their old companions, *and to many, exceedingly hazardous; and their* busi-

\* See the next sermon in this volume on the omnipresence of God.



business must be, as much as possible, to avoid, and shut themselves up from both. Upon *others*, too much severity, restraint, and abstinence, have as fatal effects; and they must by no means seclude themselves from the world, or the innocent enjoyments and amusements of it. Let every one consider, that the end to be answered is reformation, and that without the end, the means, however solemn they may appear, are of no manner of significance. In every case, the conversation and advice of a serious and skilful friend, will be of great use; not as a confessor, to receive absolution from him, or pay a blind obedience to his injunctions, but for the sake of the natural impression the force of friendship has on the mind. "Let them take sweet counsel together, and walk unto the house of God in company,"<sup>a</sup> for "as iron sharpeneth iron, so shall a man sharpen the countenance of his friend."<sup>b</sup>

I HAVE now finished what I proposed, both by endeavouring previously to hinder men from vicious practices, showing the

Y 3

ex-

<sup>a</sup> Ps. lv. 14.<sup>b</sup> Prov. xxvii. 17.

SERMON. extream hardships they will thereby lay

XIII. upon themselves; and likewise charitably  
endeavoured to allure, and win them over  
to a reformation. But I cannot shut up  
this discourse, without spending a moment  
farther, in lamenting the difficulties which,  
I have observed, attend repentance, from  
the rigour, censure, coldness, and barba-  
rous neglect, which people, whose charac-  
ters charity may lead us to allow to be good  
upon the whole, are apt to show on such  
occasions. But, this is far from imitating  
the example of our blessed Saviour, who  
has set us the most amiable pattern of  
candour and compassion, in his behaviour  
towards publicans and sinners; towards the  
woman taken in adultery; and to the young  
man "whom he loved," though the young  
man would by no means part with his  
possessions, in order to be converted to  
him.

AND how odious, as well as unchristian,  
this conduct is, will appear from that most  
beautiful parable of the prodigal son, de-  
signed to represent to us the great compas-  
sion of God towards penitents, proceeding  
from the universal goodness of his nature:

Which

an argument against vice.

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Which is finely exemplified in the parable; *See M.*  
for such as was the conduct of the father *XIII.*

to his returning son, such will be the conduct of our heavenly Father to his children. His dividing his living between his two sons, and his reply to the eldest, who never had disobliged him, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine," are the strongest instances of goodness imaginable. But his particular goodness in this case is finely painted, in his *SEEING* the prodigal, who was come to himself, and returned to a sense of his duty, and *RUNNING* to him, *when he was yet afar off,*<sup>a</sup> both which are very extraordinary in an old man; in his not suffering him to finish what he had to say, but immediately calling to his servants to attend him.—Hear the representation in our Saviour's own words.  
"And he arose, and came to his father."  
"But when he was yet a great way off,"  
"his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." And the son said unto him,  
"Father, I have sinned against heaven and

Y 4

" in

<sup>a</sup> Luke xv. 31.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. ver. 20.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. ver. 22.



SERM. "in thy sight, and am no more worthy  
 XIII. "to be called thy son." Our Saviour had  
 told us, he intended to add, "Make me  
 "as one of thy hired servants." But  
 here the father interrupts him, and said  
 "to his servants, Bring forth the best  
 "robe and put it on him, and put a ring  
 "on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and  
 "bring hither the fatted calf and kill it,  
 "and let us eat and be merry."

WE may wrap ourselves in spiritual  
 pride as we please; and cry to a penitent,  
 "Stand by thyself, come not near me, I  
 "am holier than thou:" But in vain do  
 we call ourselves the children of God;  
 unless in this, as well as in all other re-  
 spects, we are "merciful, as our Father  
 "which is in heaven is merciful," giv-  
 ing to every returning prodigal, a fatted  
 calf instead of husks, the best robe in-  
 stead of rags, and encouraging him even  
 with every ornament and grace<sup>d</sup>. In vain  
 like-

<sup>a</sup> Luke xv. 21.    <sup>b</sup> Ib. ver. 19.    <sup>c</sup> Ib. ver. 22, 23.

<sup>d</sup> Rings, and shoes, were marks of distinction among  
 the antients. The first were the ornaments of freemen,  
 of persons of the first rank, those in great power, or of  
 large possessions. The last were worn by children tenderly  
 educated.



an argument against vice.

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likewise do such rigorous persons pray, **SERM.**  
that his "will may be done on earth, as it **XIII.**  
"is in heaven," where we are told, "there  
"is joy over one sinner that repenteth,  
"more than over ninety and nine just  
"persons that need no repentance."

*Luke xv. 7.*

**SER-**

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## SERMON XIV.

The consequences of a right belief  
of the omnipresence of God.

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PSALM cxxxix. 6.

*Whither shall I go then from thy spirit? or  
whither shall I go then from thy presence?*

SERM.  
XIV.

**T**HERE seems to be very little occasion for a metaphysical proof of the omnipresence of God; it being almost impossible to form any idea of the nature of God without it. There could be no such thing as consciousness of guilt, and dread of punishment from him, if we could suppose him in any sense absent from us: And yet there was scarce ever a man of so very savage a disposition, as never to have had apprehensions of that kind. Nor does it much signify, whether we are able to account for all the difficul-

ties

ties that may be raised upon the head: **SERM.**  
Namely, whether God's being every where **XIV.**  
present, be consistent with the existence of  
any other beings: Whether all beings  
would not then be parts, or portions of  
God: Or whether we should not see all  
things in Him.

It is very certain, there are other beings  
besides God; which can be accounted for  
no otherwise, than that they are creatures  
to whom he has given existence, that they  
are dependent upon, and accountable to  
him. So that the fact is absolutely against  
the first supposition.—And as to the se-  
cond, that all other beings are parts, or  
portions of God; this must end in atheism,  
because we see that many of them are void  
of sense and perception; and others are  
imperfect and vicious; and many extremely  
miserable. Which are all ideas quite in-  
consistent with that of God; who must be  
possessed of all possible perfection, must be  
immutable, and compleatly happy.—The  
other notion, of our seeing all things in  
God, must either result in this last, and  
so be chargeable with the same conse-  
quences; or else be only an ingenious, fan-  
ciful commentary, of no great significance,  
on

The consequences of a right belief  
 SERM. on what the apostle says, that "in him

XIV.

XV.

"we live, and move, and have our being;" serving well enough for the amusement of inquisitive minds, the sophistry of a cloister, or the imagination of youth; pardonable indeed, where the mind is sincerely in search after truth, and the consequences I have mentioned, not seen through.

WE perceive visible effects of the power of God in every place; and there can be no conceiving how any being can have power where it is not. For, to suppose any being to be in one place, and the virtues of that being in another, is the absurdest supposition in the world. If it be said, that God communicates power, in the same manner as we communicate motion to a stone, or to any other projectile; and has given laws to the universe, by which all the movements of it are governed, and directed; but afterwards interposes no farther. This will by no means give us any clear ideas of the question. Because, tho' mathematicians can, and do, truly, and certainly calculate the force of projectiles, according to the quantity of their solid contents.



of the omnipresence of God.

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tents, and to the powers of the instrument S.E.M.  
which sets them in motion; and can tell, XIV.  
to the greatest exactness, the proportion  
with which the planets, or any other bod-  
ies gravitate towards each other, as they  
have learned from long experience and ob-  
servation on facts: Yet ask any philosopher,  
WHAT it is that accelerates, or that weak-  
ens their several forces? and how they are  
communicated? He will be as much at a  
loss as a common day-labourer; and either  
use expressions which convey no distinct  
ideas; or else frankly own, that they are re-  
solvable into nothing but the power and pro-  
vidence, that is, the constant presence, and  
interposition of God, in whom "they move,  
and have their being."

BESIDES, if God has at once given laws  
to the universe, and afterwards interposes  
no farther: Where was he, when he gave  
those laws? If he is not present every where,  
he must be confined; and consequently be  
finite and imperfect, and may be corporeal,  
or any thing; which must at last end in  
atheism, or at least in what is as bad as  
atheism to us, because we shall not then be  
able to say where, or what he is; and so  
our ideas must at best be undetermined,  
and

The consequences of a right belief  
 SERM. and all religion be quite impracticable;  
 XIV. which is the grossest atheism; for where,  
 or how, can we then address ourselves to  
 him?

If it be conceived that he sees, and knows all things by his eye, in the same manner as our eye sees things at a great distance, where we are not present corporally; neither will this afford us much satisfaction on the subject. Because seeing, or knowing things, without being present to direct, or remedy them, is still imperfection, contrary to the idea of God, and consequently atheism. For, on this supposition, whatever angels or messengers, or, as in the heathen system, inferior deities, he may employ; they may get out of his reach after disobeying his orders, without any possibility of punishment. And what absurdities must arise from such a supposition? For if one may get out of his reach, so may another, and so may all; and consequently, there may be no government whatsoever; which is the same as there being no God.

It is no answer to this, that the scriptures represent him as being "in heaven" and that we are taught to address him, as

"our

of the omnipresence of God.

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"our Father" there;<sup>a</sup> and that Solomon S. a. m. gives it as a reason for our behaving with XIV.

the utmost decency and reverence towards him, "God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few."<sup>b</sup>

For this is, in truth, intended to give us the most exalted ideas of the omnipresence of God, who is by no means confined to this spot of earth; but pervades the whole universe, the heavens, the earth, the seas, and all that is therein; as was evidently the intent of the Psalmist in the words of the text, and their context, "Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue; but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it all together. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go then from thy spirit? Or whither shall I go then from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my

<sup>a</sup> Matt. vi. 9.

<sup>b</sup> Eccles. v. 2.

SERM.

" my bed in hell, behold thou art there.

XIV.

" If I take the wings of the morning, and

" dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

" even there shall thine hand lead me, and

" thy right-hand shall hold me. If I

" say, surely the darkness shall cover me,

" even the night shall be light about me.

" Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee,

" but the night shineth as the day; the

" darkness and the light are both alike to

" thee."

THE same sentiment is expressed in So-

lomon's prayer at the dedication of the tem-

ple, in the prophecy of *Jeremiah*, and

many other passages of holy writ, " Be-

" hold, the heaven of heavens cannot con-

" tain thee, how much less this house that

" I have builded?" " Am I a God at

" hand, saith the Lord, and not a God

" afar off? Can any hide himself in secret

" places, that I shall not see him, saith the

" Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth,

" saith the Lord?" What glorious, and

sublime representations of God, are here!

And with what majesty, and beauty is every

expression chosen!

Now,



## of the omnipresence of God.

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S E R M.

XIV.

Now, though we can have no adequate ideas of such infinite immensity, yet we can have more clear and distinct ideas thereof, than we can have of God being any where limited or confined. It is certain, the consciousness of his presence is the same in any one part of the universe, as in another; and let us go where we will, we can never get rid of it. For which reason, as I have not made these observations for the sake of advancing a speculative truth, but for the sake of the moral use I am going to make of it; it will be to no purpose to raise any farther objections. Let any man's mind get rid of the idea, and I will allow, that what I am about to say is not worth his consideration. But till then, the pretence is only like the idle cavils of a criminal in a court of justice; they themselves will tend to condemn him.

LET us now consider, what moral uses we are to make of this doctrine. And we shall be able to draw many inferences, for our comfort and satisfaction, and others likewise for our caution and practice. The latter of which was the chief view where-

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with

1<sup>st</sup>. We may from hence be assured of the watchful care and providence of God over us. And as the proof of the *omnipresence* of God arises from the necessary perfection of his nature, his care and protection must be such as will best answer the end of our present situation, and the trial we are to undergo in this life. Which will support us under all the troubles we meet with in it; his constant presence, joined to consummate wisdom and omnipotence, putting it out of all possibility, but that he must do what is best for us: And should inspire us in every circumstance of life, with a reasonable courage, when we are engaged on the side of virtue: Nor can we have any room to despair; for, "if we set the Lord always before us, (have a due and reverend regard to this consideration, ever uppermost on our minds) "because he is on our right hand, we "shall not be moved."

2<sup>dly</sup>. THIS consideration should support us under slander, and undeserved censure: Since he, who is every where present, must

see

# of the omnipresence of God

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see our thoughts, and "try our hearts, SERM.  
and our reins." We are used in divi- XIV.

bity to branch out the natural, as well as the moral perfections of God into particulars, to suit ourselves the better to ordinary capacities; and to distinguish between his omniscience, and omnipresence; though in truth, they, as well as the moral ones, come pretty nearly to one and the same idea. And therefore, we see the author of my text arguing promiscuously from them both, "Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Whither shall I go then from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee then from thy presence?"

As if they were either one and the same, or else so inseparably connected, that there could not be one, without the other. Omniscience, without omnipresence, cannot be accounted for; but omnipresence, necessarily implies omniscience. From which consideration, we should assume to ourselves the same satisfaction the apostle assumes; "it is a very small thing that I should be judged of man's judgment; he that judgeth me is the Lord." And this,

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wher

<sup>a</sup> Ps. vii. 9.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 3.



Sermon whether our reputations suffer in the private cabals of defamation and detraction, or in the more publick and solemn consistories of law, and human courts of judicature. For, as we often find it in this life; a man may lie for a long time under a load of obloquy and reproach, and at length his innocence may appear; "he may lift up his face without spot, his righteousness may be brought forth in the light, and his judgment as the noon-day:" So, we may be assured, that at the last day, "when the Lord cometh, he both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God."

3dly, As this consideration will give a general satisfaction to all men, in a dependance on the care and providence of God over them; and a particular consolation to the innocent, under any calamities they meet with: So, will it be matter of infinite dread, and confusion, to the secret sinner, that all his impurities, violence, and ingratitude are intimately known, and will, unrepented of, be hereafter severely punished

by



of the omnipresence of God. T

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by him, "unto whom all hearts be open, SERM  
"all desires known, and from whom no  
"secrets are hid." But, **XIV**

*Asbly*, As the end of laying before sin-  
ners the terrors of the Lord, is not merely to  
affright and astound, but to persuade them  
to repentance and reformation; my princi-  
pal design is, as I said before, to show the  
good effect this thought and apprehension  
being always uppermost on our minds,  
would certainly, and indeed must necessa-  
rily, have, to enable us to master all our  
passions, correct our evil habits, and tho-  
roughly to purify our hearts: Filling us  
with the same awful sentiments, described  
to possess the minds of men in the dreadful  
day of accounts, when "the Kings of  
"the earth, and the great men, and the  
"rich men, and the chief captains, and the  
"mighty men, and every bond man, and  
"every free man, shall hide themselves in  
"the dens and in the rocks of the moun-  
"tains, and shall say to the mountains  
"and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from  
"the face of Him that sitteth on the  
"throne, and from the wrath of the  
"lamb."

Z 3

REA-

A Rev. vi. 15.

SERM.

REASON will tell us, that we are as truly  
 XIV. in the presence of God now, as we shall be  
 THEN; and, if we are wise, should in-  
 duce us to live in the same manner, as we  
 shall then wish we had lived. For though  
 the punishment of our vices be reserved to  
 the decision of that solemn day, no one  
 knows how soon the state of his trial here  
 may be determined, or whether the final  
 commission for his departure be not already  
 signed. After which, there remained no-  
 thing but "a fearful looking for of judg-  
 ment."

It is too common indeed, for men to de-  
 ceive, and defend themselves with the ima-  
 gination of the great difficulty, if not im-  
 possibility of subduing, and governing any  
 favourite passion or inclination; at the same  
 time that they acknowledge it would be  
 very right in them to do it; and they will  
 go so far as to pretend, they wish it was in  
 their power. But they will immediately  
 see, that the rule for it which I have  
 laid down, is the most easy and obvious in  
 the world (namely, to consider themselves  
 as always in the presence of God, who has  
 forbid such gratifications, and will severely  
 punish

punish them) if they would but recollect, what restraint the company of our fellow-creatures has upon us, and what an encouragement it is to laudable and worthy actions.

SERMON  
XIV

A CONSIDERATION so plain and sensible, that it is one of the best rules that ever was given for writing well and sublimely, which *Longinus* has laid down, to imagine how *Homer*, or *Plato*, or *Thucydides*, or any other of the best writers of antiquity, would think, or express themselves on the same subject; or what judgment they would form on what we write, if they were to hear it read to them, and it was submitted to their judgment. And this rule has had its effect, to furnish the world with many excellent authors, who have fancied them present, in either one or other capacity, as models or critics. But what are *Homer*, or *Plato*, or *Demosthenes*, or *Thucydides*, or all the writers of antiquity; or "the wise, or the scribe, or the disputers of this world," compared with him "who seeth not as man seeth," and who is really present with

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us,



SERM. us, when the presence of such beings, is only fictions and imaginary?

XIV.

LET us pursue this reflection: And for the certainty of the rule, consider, and no man can fail to observe it, what effects the presence of other creatures, whether of superior, or equal rank, actually has upon us. Should we not be ashamed, to utter a lewd or a base thought before our inferiours, servants, children, or the meanest of mankind? Nay, is any thing more common, than to be ashamed to appear what we really are? What subterfuges of dress do we fly to; what disguises do we throw over our most innocent sentiments; what various visages do we wear; what masks, what cloaks, what hypocrisy do we appear in? Nay, how often do we endeavour to hide ourselves even from *our own eyes*? And how afraid are we that we should discover what bad characters we are? This makes us fly to a thousand vain amusements; to company, to the soporific power of wine, and the like, to hide ourselves from whomsoever we can, be it from our own thoughts, or from the eyes of others; and we should think that person our greatest enemy, who should draw our faithful

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of the omnipresence of God.

portrait, or hold forth the true mirror, in which we might behold our natural features, and complexion.—But, if we are

thus afraid of other beings of equal infirmities, and would appear fair in their eyes; if we are thus afraid of an ideal itself, and would fain think we are so much better than we really are: Should it not be our highest ambition, to appear lovely, and approved in the eyes of Him who is perfection itself, and on whom no disguise can pass?

NOR is it only thus in general; but it is the same with regard to every particular action. Would a judge, who represented a potent and righteous Prince, dare to pronounce an unjust decree in his Prince's presence? What labourer would dare to doiter away his time, when his master was at his elbow, and saw with his own eyes how his business was neglected? Or, would the vilest and most abandoned of men, have effrontery enough to commit an outrage, or a theft in the sight of the place of execution, and of the magistrate ready to do his office?—By such like instances we see, men *can*, and men *do* restrain themselves from following their secret inclinations,

Sermons, and indulging their strongest lusts and passions, on the principle I am arguing upon.

XIV.

To show farther, how extremely docile, how susceptible of instruction, how capable of government and restraint human nature is; let us cast our eyes on the history of the most large and populous countries, and see how they have submitted to government, even the most despotical, lavish, and oppressive, at the beck and nod of a single tyrant, who was not so much as personally present to see his orders obeyed, or to punish the violation of them. *Egypt, Persia, Babylon, Lydia, Greece, and Rome*, are undeniable instances of this truth: And even in the age we live in, to say nothing of some of our neighbouring monarchies, the discipline of the *Jamzaries* in the *Grand Seignior's* court, will show us what regulations men may be brought under, with proper persons to watch, and inspect them.

It is an observation of some celebrated writers, that no one is born without capacity

\* The reader may see a particular account of it, in the Rev. Mr. Birch's collection of the works of our most ingenious, and learned antiquarian Mr. Greaves.

city; but that the stupidity of men is owing S. 2. M. 2  
 to nothing else, but neglect of proper dis- XIV.  
 cipline and education in their youth, which  
 gives an opportunity of contracting the  
 most untoward habits. We shall see it to  
 be a very just observation, if we will only  
 remark on the discipline of an army; com-  
 posed generally of persons, of all others the  
 least ingenious, and most uneducated. How  
 exact are their motions! with what uni-  
 formity, and regularity do they perform  
 every part of their exercise! and who dare  
 hesitate a moment to obey the orders of  
 their superiors! How are the most coward-  
 ly of men, forced to run into manifest dan-  
 ger, and sometimes rush upon certain death?  
 Is it not owing, after the necessary lessons  
 and instructions, to the presence of their  
 commanders, and the vigilant eyes with  
 which they are observed? Nay, what is  
 that noble principle of *glory*, which enables  
 men to perform such excellent, such gene-  
 rous, such meritorious actions; but the de-  
 sire of a fair appearance among men, and  
 to gain their approbation and esteem? Or,  
 what is that contrary principle of *shame*,  
 which leads them to forbear many things,  
 which perhaps they have a secret inclina-  
 tion



tion to; but fear of losing their reputation in the world, and gaining the ill opinion of mankind? Both which principles it will always be the care of a liberal, and ingenious education to inspire men with.

NOR has the exalted principle of glory only, but that of *common decency* the same effect. In courts of judicature, and all publick assemblies, every one puts on a propriety of behaviour, and avoids giving the reins to any irregular appetite or passion. Even an atheist will put on the appearance of devotion in a church, dreading the imputation of singularity, and to be what is called taken notice of. And the effect of the presence of other beings to restrain our passions, is so very great, that perhaps it is impossible for any man to defile his neighbour's wife, attempt upon the chastity of the daughter of his friend, or break in upon the honour of any family, whilst the guardians of such persons were looking on. For baseness of this nature, men seek out for shades, and obscurity, and darkness. Nay, so powerful is the apprehension of the presence of other beings over us, that even those who dare to glory in their shame, and boast of their flagrant ini-



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iniquities after the commission, have generally too much wicked discretion to perpetrate them before witnesses.

SERMON.

XIV.

BUT, alas, what a vain thought and imagination is it, that we are ever secret or private, when the all-piercing eye of God is always upon us; and he is present, even when we are absent from ourselves! Or, how can we flatter ourselves that we shall never be found out, when we are already seen! Or, why do we flee the company of a fellow-mortal, when that great Being stays with us, whose company we shall never be able to shake off!

If we would duly attend to this consideration, surely we could never bring ourselves to be guilty of the vices we now practise with so much boldness and presumption. Art thou afraid to loiter, or neglect thy duty, in the presence of an earthly master? Consider, that both he and thou have a master also in heaven, who will shortly come to judgment to take account of all his servants, and who sees how thy talent lies neglected, even though thou shouldst hide it in the centre of the earth.—Art thou afraid to suffer thyself to be corrupted, and to pronounce an unjust decree

in

SERM. in the presence of thy Prince? And dost

XIV. thou not tremble at the thought, that the  
bribe thou hast taken, and conveyed with  
such wondrous privacy to thy coffer, was  
at a time when there was no less a Being  
at thy right-hand, than "the King of  
"Kings, and the only Ruler of Princes?"

Can we show so much complaisance, and  
pay such deference to an assembly of beings  
of the same size and species with ourselves,  
and be so perfectly rude, so absolutely in-  
sensible, in the presence of the Lord of hea-  
ven and earth?—Shall we be struck with  
such dismay at the resentment of an injured  
husband, or the inexorable revenge of a  
brother of the unlawful object of love, the  
honour of whose families we are contri-  
ving to stain; and yet rush undauntedly on  
the wrath of him, "the thunder of whose  
"power who can understand, before  
"whom the pillars of heaven tremble  
"and are astonished at his reproof?"

WHAT amazing absurdities are these,  
and what strange and idle creatures are we.  
Let us recollect ourselves, and no longer  
act thus unworthy of our reasonable na-  
ture: But let us pay as much greater re-  
gard

of the omnipresence of God.

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gard to the presence of God, as God is superior to the highest rank of our fellow-creatures; for, the greatest of them looketh only on the outward "appearance, but "the Lord looketh on the heart?" For which reason, we should take as nice a care of the inward disposition of our minds, to season them with wisdom, and unspotted purity before H<sup>Y</sup>M, as we would take of our outward persons, before the most amiable and elegant associates that we accompany withal.

If men would habituate themselves to this thought, they might as easily regulate their inward dispositions on all, as they now do their external behaviour, on some particular occasions. And when we contemplate the adorable excellencies and perfections of the divine nature, it would give us the same exquisite pleasure and satisfaction to do so, as it now gives us, to prune away whatever is disagreeable in our tempers, and manners, and appearance, to those by whom we desire to be seen in the fairest point of light.

AND this would prove an unerring rule of conduct to ALL beings whatsoever, as the



SERMON. the supreme searcher of hearts is equally

XIV. superior to *all*, as to *any one* of them, between whom there is in his eye no distinction whatsoever.\* A consideration, one would particularly recommend to persons of high rank; and the more strongly, in proportion to their several degrees, because they seem to have no other restraint on their actions at all. Some are without any controul, others under very little, from any superior in this world; being apt to think, they are accountable to none for any part of their behaviour; and it is very difficult to bring them to attend to any admonitions, though delivered by persons of the most sacred characters, and on the most solemn occasions. *Nathan*, though a Prophet sent with a special message from God himself, was forced to make use of artifice, fiction, and circumlocution, to bring the royal sinner to a sense of two of the basest of crimes; and to save himself from the severest judgments of the Deity, whose presence he had for a long time been unmindful of. But, if persons in high life would pause only a moment, to observe the influence their company has on their inferiors; unless they are void of all generous principles, they would



See the much greater influence the presence of God ought to have on them, Between whom there is such an infinite distance, that I dare not presume so much as to offer at a comparision. I shall only add, to increase this consideration, that the author of my text, who gives us such a fine description of the omnipresence of God, and draws such pious reflections from it, was no less than the King of *Israel*, even *David* the "man after God's own heart."

Thus have I considered the natural and obvious consequences of a right belief of the omnipresence of God. And they are so natural and obvious, that it is infinitely surprizing we do not oftener see them take effect in the hearts and lives of men. There is but one consideration, on which it can be accounted for; and that is, that God is invisible to us, over whose corporeal eye a thick veil is drawn, so that no mortal "man hath seen God at any time, nor can see."

But, it is the business of *reason* and *faith* to represent spiritual objects as strongly to our minds, as visible objects are represented to our bodily sight. And this will convince

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vince

SERM. vince every thinking man, that FAITH is  
 XIV. the most rational, the most noble, the  
 most exalted principle we can act upon.  
 And that, to be without faith, must al-  
 ways be attended with dreadful and mis-  
 chievous consequences.

To prevent which, there cannot be more  
 effectual means than *daily contemplation*  
 and *private, social, and family worship*.  
 Which, when we do not rest in the exter-  
 nal performances; nor fly to them as a cloak  
 for hypocrisy; nor confine all our religion  
 to them; nor grow spiritually proud there-  
 by; but use them only as HELPS, to keep  
 up in our minds, and the minds of those  
 about us, a sense of the omnipresence of  
 God, and of our dependance on, and ac-  
 countableness to him, could not fail of pro-  
 ducing these most excellent and desirable  
 effects.

XV.

# SERMON XV.

On the present state of probation.

ISAIAH v. 3, 4.

*And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. What could have been done more for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?*

**I**T is common in divinity to represent **SERM.**  
this life as a state of trial and probation **XV.**  
for another, wherein our condition  
will be irrevocably fixed and determined,  
according to our conduct and behaviour  
here. By which representation we can,  
not only account for, but see, the great  
wisdom and propriety of the evils and af-  
flictions we meet with, and every other  
species of discipline; which, though for  
A a 2 the

On the present state of probation.

the present they may not seem to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterwards will yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are called thereby.

BUT this has had the common fate with every thing else that is serious, and good to meet with cavils and objections. As if it was either a reflection on the omniscience of God; who thoroughly knows the tempers and dispositions of his creature, and stands not in need of methods to find out who is fit for future happiness, and who is not: Or else, as if it was a reflection on his justice and mercy, to make an eternal state of happiness or misery, depend on so small a portion of time as our continuance in this world, and on the actions of such a frail and weak creature as man is on all hands allowed to be, and surrounded with innumerable, and those very powerful temptations; enough to overcome a much more strong and hardy being.

BUT this objection, like most others to the scheme of revelation, is founded on an absolute mistake of the case. No one ever pretended, nor did any sensible man ever



put it in such a light, as if God wanted to try us, so as that he could no otherwise be able to form a judgment who was fit for happiness, or who was not: But it is called a state of trial, only with regard to ourselves: that we, and all other subordinate creatures, may be convinced in the future judgment, that the doom to be pronounced upon us is righteous, without all controversy. In the same manner as God Almighty calls to the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, and men of *Judah* in the text, to judge between him and "his vineyard, what could have been done more to his vineyard, that he had not done in it;" and of the great unreasonableness, that, after so much pains and care as had been bestowed upon it, it should "bring forth wild, instead of good grapes." For, the appeal is to the men of *Judah*, and the "inhabitants of *Jerusalem* to judge" in their own case, as is evident from the Prophet's telling us at the seventh verse, of "the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of *Israel*, and the men of *Judah* his pleasant plant."

SERM.

My intention in discoursing on this subject, is,

XV.

I. To show that this world is a state of trial for another : And the wisdom of God in it.

II. To draw some inferences for our own particular use, and show the moral improvement we are to make of what will be said.

I. I AM to show, that this world is a state of trial for another : And the wisdom of God in it.

THE design of the creation of man, is, by various steps and gradations, to raise him to perfection : For so the other life is described in scripture, " The general assembly and church of the first-born who are written in heaven," where are " God the judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect." And the nature of that perfection, is in other places represented to consist, in " being perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect." An endeavour after which, is the sum of religion

<sup>a</sup> Heb. xii. 12.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. v. 48.

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gion here; and the actual attainment of it, S. & R. M.  
the reward of religion hereafter. XV.

Now if this is to be attained only by degrees, and we are to go through certain stages of existence as a kind of progress to perfection, go "from glory to glory," as the apostle phrases it; the whole must depend entirely on the setting out in the first: Nor can it possibly be otherwise. As in a journey, if a man was to mistake his road, and turn to the right instead of the left, or wander into every bye-way he met with, he would either never come to his journey's end at all; or at least, much later, and with much more difficulty, than he who set out right, and minded nothing else but getting to the end of it, as fast as he could. It is the same in the journey of life, the end of which is moral perfection, and rest, and happiness. If we set out in vicious courses, or deviate from the paths of honour and virtue; how is it possible we should ever arrive at perfection? And at last, it can only be by returning over the dirty ditches, and thorny hedges of repentance.

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To

a 2 Cor. iii. 18.

SERM.



To answer this end of a gradual progress to perfection; no state seems to be so proper for man to be born in, as that of infancy. Great abilities, and strong propensities, to virtue, in the first beginnings of life, would be inconsistent with a state of trial; which necessarily implies in some periods of it, weakness, docility, discipline, and improvement: So that virtue may not be a mechanical principle, or an act of necessity; but a matter of man's own choice, when rightly represented and explained to him. Otherwise, it would not be at all different from the instinct of other animals. But, now, as his understanding opens, he has perception to see its beauty and excellence; and has sufficient strength to pursue it, which will gather and increase by exercise and use.

And this is confirmed by experience, as well as by reason, in the visible good effects of a well-ordered education. There is an admirable connection in all the works of God. He has thought proper to put the care of this into the hands of parents, and other guardians and instructors, in order to enrich the common stock of benevolence, and charity, and love, in which moral per-

fection



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fection consists; giving parents the exquisite pleasure which arises from training up their offspring; and giving children the gentle and chearful returns of gratitude, till it comes to their turn to feel the same pleasure and delight, in their own families. And the effects of bad education are not at all owing to this scheme of Providence, but to the absurdity of parents; who, instead of beginning early to inspire their children with noble and generous sentiments, leading them into the path of virtue, encouraging them to tread in it, applauding them for every step they advance, and setting them an example of perseverance; rather inspire them with diabolical principles of avarice and ambition, or at least drown all thoughts of generous virtue in a little sordid learning, or in a mechanical manner of getting their daily bread, or worldly honours and preferments. An abuse of human liberty, which Providence intended to answer the noblest purposes; for which abuse Providence is therefore not accountable!

THE first beginnings then of our trial are lodged in the hands of other persons, whose business it is to teach us the nature of this pre-

SEK M. present state, and WHAT it is a trial for,  
 XV. the right performance of which duty, is a  
 great part of their own trial. This, considering the feeble and helpless condition wherein it seems proper we should come into the world, cannot be otherwise; and to argue against it, is to arraign the divine wisdom in the whole of our creation. If parents, and other instructors, were faithfully to do their duty, it is the highest probability (and in a state of trial it can be no more, for if it was absolutely certain, it would be no trial; I say, it is the highest probability) that children would answer the end of their existence; according to that passage of *Solomon*, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

It is very true, that if parents and instructors neglect their duty, the consequence to children is very dangerous. But for this likewise Providence in this and many other countries; has made a very wise and gracious provision, by the general instructions given in the Bible, and many excellent books of human compofure. Besides which, there are public churches open one day in seven,

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seven, whereto all have access, and to S. & M. which it is millions to one, but custom, *XY.* curiosity, or accident, may some time or other lead them all; in which case it is not unreasonable to suppose, that certain degrees of grace and favour from heaven may be aiding and assisting. And wherever any *peculiar* difficulties arise, there is no doubt, but the omnipresent, omniscient Being, who sees and knows both them and all their circumstances, will make every kind and favourable allowance. And we have no reason to doubt from the analogy of Providence, but that in every country some methods or other are used for the same purposes, though particular accounts of them may not have reached us. Throughout the world, let all do what they can to the best of their power; and what can be feared from infinite mercy! Throughout the world, let any neglect to do what is in his power, and what can be hoped from infinite justice! It is difficulty and frailty, that constitute a state of trial: And nothing is more certain than that "the Judge of all the earth will do right." Of this the scripture itself has given us a solemn assurance, when it declares, that "God

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SERMON. "is no respecter of persons; but in every

XV.

nation; He that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him."

That "the judge of all the earth will do right;" no one can possibly doubt, who considers what he has already done; and the relation of it to the whole scheme of our creation. For it is evident, he has given to man reason sufficient to trace out, or at least to assent to as soon as proposed to him, the existence of a superior Being, his Creator, his Preserver, his Judge, and the relation he stands in to him:—To direct himself in the path of virtue.—To show, from his own make, and the nature of the world around him, that his soul is immortal; capable of very sublime improvements: By virtue approaching towards perfection: And by the barriars of many near to perfection, that he is finally capable of attaining it.

I know, there are many who affect to disparage this noble being. Some would represent man as a mere machine, set upon by superior agents, without any will or powers of his own; and from thence conclude, that he is not accountable for his



actions, not rewardable or punishable, either S. 1. 16.  
in this, or any other state. Others also XV.  
deny his free agency; and yet more ab-  
surdly than the former, suppose him to be  
reserved for future rewards, or punishments,  
just as the sovereign controulor who directs  
all his motions, has pre-ordained. The  
first disclaim all notions of revelation. The  
last pretend to draw their opinion from no  
other fountain than revelation.

To the last, it shall suffice to observe,  
that as such a doctrine would destroy the  
natural difference between good and evil,  
without which there can be no such thing  
as virtue or religion in the world, it cannot  
possibly be the doctrine of revelation; nor  
can any messenger really sent by God, de-  
liver it: And whoever does deliver it, would  
by that alone demonstrate himself to be  
an impostor. It is needless therefore, to  
enter into disputes about any passages of  
scripture they may produce for their pur-  
pose; they must, and cannot but, have  
some other meaning. For, to suppose a  
creature to be eternally punished for acti-  
ons, which it was not in his own power to  
prevent, but which he was under a neces-  
sity of performing; is to suppose the author

of

SERM. of such punishment, to be the most unreasonable, tyrannical, and wicked being in the universe; and the more power he has, the more he is to be dreaded, and the more he must be hated. I speak with warmth upon this head, because a more detestable doctrine cannot be propagated.

To those who, disclaiming all notions of revelation, teach that man is a mere machine; we may give an answer like that of the philosopher to a person disputing against the possibility of motion, by rising up, and walking. Let every man consult his own breast, and examine whether he has not liberty of action; whether he is not conscious of having done wrong, and that he might have done better. Let him ask himself, what is implied in the notion of repentance; or in condemning, or approving the actions of others; or in deliberations with regard to present, and resolutions with regard to future, things; and the self-satisfaction and enjoyment which arise from laudable and meritorious exploits.—If these people have no such consciousness themselves, let it suffice that they rank in the creation with mere brutes; but let them by no means degrade the

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worthy part of mankind, who feel a di-  
viner pleasure, to the same level. — For my  
own part, no arguments can get the better  
of my inward perception of these things;  
and nothing appears to me more absurd,  
than to oppose *metaphysics* to common  
sense.

To those who will judge by common  
sense, I would only propose to contem-  
plate the capacities of the soul, of which  
we may judge by the force of resolution.  
Whereby men have conquered their over-  
sitious habits; have endured themselves to  
things at first the most shocking and dis-  
agreeable; have faced the most imminent  
dangers, and by prudent management  
wholly conquered and defeated them. This  
appears more strongly in nothing, than in  
the accounts we have of persons under the  
misfortune of shipwreck; cast either upon  
some desolate shore, or upon places sur-  
rounded by savage beasts, or by men still  
more savage than they, and from the me-  
thods they have contrived for their support,  
and their defence from such dangerous ene-  
mies; the patience with which they have  
born such uncommon and severe afflicti-  
ons; till at length, by prudent foresight,

in-

84 N. M. indefatigable pains, and sundry kinds of  
 XV. stratagems, they have both delivered, and  
 returned to their native soil. To which let  
 me add, the sufferings men have endured  
 from a principle of zeal, for false as well  
 as true religion: Things they have done  
 singly, without example, without any to  
 abet them, and without the least hope or  
 prospect of honour or applause. And what  
 have not men been able to do, when com-  
 packed in civil societies, where every one  
 receives all the aid and assistance a whole  
 community can give him? Where there  
 are schools and nurseries for the young,  
 and where the aged and experienced com-  
 municate their sentiments and improve-  
 ments, and each man refines upon those of  
 his neighbour? By which means, arts and  
 sciences have been brought to great perfec-  
 tion, and every age become more know-  
 ing, and polished than those which went  
 before it. Besides this, what advantages  
 do men enjoy from the protection of civil  
 policy? And the resistance which a well-  
 trained, and disciplined people, united to-  
 gether by a common love of liberty, and  
 a patriot affection for each other, were  
 able to make against the enmities of man-  
 kind,



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kind, and the disturbers of the common S. X. M.  
peace? XV.

Is it reasonable to believe that God has given such force and energy to the human mind for the affairs of this world, with which it is concerned during a small portion only of its existence, and left it utterly debilitated in matters of higher concern, those which relate to the immortal state? The *weakness* of human reason in these things, is nothing to the purpose. How should it be other than weak in a state of trial? It is sufficient that it has strength enough for its present condition. And it is utterly inconsistent with the perfections of God, not to give it proportionable help for every time of need, or to require more than its capacities would be able to answer. As our Saviour observes in the gospel, "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. And to whom men

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SERMON 2<sup>d</sup> "I have committed much of him they

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"ask the more."

ONE would imagine, this was put out of all controversy by the question proposed in the text, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" and the passage already mentioned, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" The first of which implies, that all men *have had* all done for them which is absolutely necessary; and the second, that while there is a wise and good Being at the helm of affairs, it *cannot* be otherwise. And those who are perpetually crying out against the sufficiency of reason, do not consider the dishonour they do to God, who has left many countries inhabited by creatures endowed with human and immortal souls, without any other guide but that of reason. And yet, the whole government of this world, moral as well as natural, must be founded in consummate wisdom and equity. But were it, as these persons would represent it, the charge of the unprofitable servant would be unanswerable, "I knew that thou art an hard master, reaping where thou hast

"not

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Summ.

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"not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:" And nothing in the world could be more reasonable than to be afraid, in the manner the unprofitable servant was, of such a being; to maintain either the one or the other of which, were blasphemy to be abhorred.

BUT, though this shows reason to be sufficient where God Almighty has in fact given nothing but reason; it by no means infers that revelation is not abundantly useful, where he has thought proper to bestow that favour. For in many countries, reason has been abused, and men have lived without God in the world." Here then a revelation of the truths of religion comes in aid of reason. And though tyranny, prejudice, priestcraft, philosophy and vain deceit, wantonness, vice, and inattention, may have hindered the universal establishment of it, for which it is plainly fitted; yet the general commerce and intercourse among mankind, have given to most men some little knowledge of the truths contained in it; which if they would thoroughly consider, and those who profess it would take more care as tho-

B b 2

roughly

SERMON, roughly to acquaint themselves with it in  
 order to assist them, might lead all man-  
 kind into many principles greatly conduc-  
 tive to their moral happiness.

THE methods of trial then, are various indeed, but wisely diversified. And whatever advantages some may have over others, we see, all have reason sufficient both for the political management of the affairs of this life; and likewise for moral conduct, and the grand duties of religion, that is to say, reverence and worship of God, patient submission to his will, and a firm expectation of a more perfect state in a future life, for which this is only a school of discipline, and state of trial and probation. And what seems to put this out of all question, is, that there is no country under heaven, of which we have any tolerable accounts, but men have some notion of its being such a state. One argument for which I beg leave to offer; and that is, that if men were not apprehensive of a future state, they have a sure remedy against all evil, by putting an end to their own existence. But such an attempt, though defended by some, is generally disapproved and condemned, among the savage, as well



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in the civilized, which I apprehend, can be no otherwise accounted for than upon the principle I have mentioned, namely, the notion of a future life, for which this is a state of trial, wherein they must account for such an action, and be severely punished for it; and shows, that there are fewer speculative atheists in the world than some affect to represent.

THE greatest difficulty upon this scheme is, that too much seems to be put into the power of young persons in the immature part of life, where the passions are headstrong, and licentious, and reason so weak as scarcely to be able to encounter, much less to conquer and govern them. A time of life, when, through mere thoughtlessness, they may contract diseases of body which may contaminate the whole mass of blood, if not bring on sudden death; or undo themselves by unequal, and disadvantageous bargains; or contract vicious habits of mind not easily cured; which may endanger their everlasting, as well as present welfare.

THIS evidently shows the moral agency of man, and that there is no part of his

SERM. rational life (for mere infancy must be ex-

XV. cepted) in which he has not freedom of

choice. However, these mischiefs may easily

be prevented, in a course of such edu-

cation as we see God Almighty has esta-

blished the relation of parents for; or by

regular civil laws; and the example and

admonition of those about them; more es-

pecially, by a tenderness, and readiness to

make their reformation easy to them, and

to aid and assist them, in remedying the

ill consequences of any false steps they have

made. And probably, it is owing to such

methods that these mischiefs in fact hap-

pen so seldom. Farther, most societies

disqualify young persons from disposing of

their property or themselves, till they come

to certain years of discretion. And nature

(as men ordinarily speak, i. e. the God of

nature) has implanted an amiable modesty

in the minds of young persons, which ren-

ders them ashamed to commit actions

they either know, or suspect to be wicked

and disgraceful. Conscience works very

early in them, if they are rightly trained

up; and "the candle of the Lord" (as

Solomon calls "the spirit of a man".)

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soon lighted, and burns bright, except extinguished, or deadened by neglect of proper management, or by ill counsel, or more mischievous example. And where any ill consequences happen from these last; how severely soever the persons to whom they are owing, may be punished, yet as God allows, and mercifully accepts of repentance, that will sufficiently rectify all mistakes, and reinstate the penitent into his favour.

It may be thought another difficulty, that this trial seems to be very unequal, by the disparity of men's conditions; some undergoing infinitely more hardships and severities, than others; being poor, while others are rich; sickly and unhealthy, while others are strong and robust; forced to get their bread by the sweat of their brows, while others who have little or nothing to do, enjoy the fruits of *their* labours; are in misery and pain, while others are in gaiety and pleasure, or in bondage and fetters, while others are at liberty, and have none to controul and oppress them.

In answer to this, I shall not lay much stress upon what some have observed, of the variety, and consequently beauty, which



SERMON. this causes in the creation. I would not tempt any one to think of enjoying an invidious satisfaction in the comparative misery of another. It will sufficiently reconcile a serious mind to it, that the all-wise disposer of us, either does now, or most certainly will hereafter, extract good out of all evil; and if there was no difficulty, there could be no trial. Every man may by virtuous conduct, and faithfully endeavouring to answer the ends of his creation, enjoy his own mind, and inward peace and happiness. And perhaps the reason of this disparity, is, that the condition every man is in is the properest trial to him; his behaviour in other, or in contrary circumstances, being to be judged of with more probability: Which will certainly one day be made apparent to every man's conscience.

THIS seems to be the reason why we are told in the christian system, that "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world;" for if it was not to appeal to the common sense of all rational creatures, but the future condition of men depended merely upon his own arbitrary



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trary pleasure, and determination, one can see no reason for so solemn a procedure. Agreeably to this sentiment, we find him even in this world, appealing to the men of *Judah* and inhabitants of *Jerusalem* in the text, to judge between him and his vineyard; and frequently declaring in scripture that he does certain things "for his name's sake," in the same manner, though infinitely superior, as wise and good men in this world; are tender of their fame and reputation among their neighbours. For this reason, it seems highly probable from the perfections of God, that he removes no man out of this life, till his disposition is sufficiently known, so that when "the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed," no one shall doubt of the propriety of the divine proceedings.

I SHALL only add under this general head, that the imperfection of the moral system is a very strong argument that it is, as I have been representing it, and can be nothing else, but a state of trial and probation. The works of God must be perfect; and therefore this comparative imperfection must have its end, and be consistent with final wisdom. I proceed,

II. To

SERM.

XV.

H. To draw some inferences for our own particular use, and shew the moral improvement we are to make of what has been said.

1<sup>st</sup>, THOUGH this world, as it is represented in scripture, and by all wise men, is a state of "vanity and vexation of spirit," yet is it so, only in a comparative sense; *i. e.* compared with the future life, and more noble periods of our being. As far as it is the appointment of God, it must by no means be thought vanity in itself; for nothing can be vanity that has a wise end. The vanity of it is of our own creating, by vicious behaviour, and its consequences: Or by immoderate expectation of more happiness than it is intended to afford: Or the unavoidable connection the wickedness of other persons has with us. But we may be assured from the perfections of God, that there is a more valuable end proposed, and another state in which his wisdom will be fully displayed; and both our reason, virtue, and happiness exalted to the highest pitch they are capable of.

2<sup>dly</sup>,

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2dly, THIS should teach us contentment SERM.  
in every condition allotted to us, and the XV.  
most patient acquiescence in all the divine  
dispensations. For the providence of God  
in this world, as connected with another,  
cannot but be wise; and we can be no  
judges of the propriety of the particular  
dispensations of it, unless we knew the  
whole of his designs, and the connection  
of them with the remaining parts both of  
the present, and future life. This, experi-  
ence should teach us; as we frequently  
find, that the most happy events could ne-  
ver have come to pass without some trou-  
ble in the beginning; but that being over,  
then the bright side appears, and we see a  
beauty in the providence. Let us reason  
then under the greatest calamities in the  
manner the apostle does, when he says,  
“ I reckon that the sufferings of this pre-  
“ sent life are not worthy to be compared  
“ with the glory that shall be revealed in  
“ us.” Which is the great business of  
faith; that noble, cheering, enlivening prin-  
ciple; a principle which will set us above  
this world, and make our passage through  
it comfortable and happy, instead of that  
melancholy and uneasiness too frequently

in-



SEEM. indulged to by persons who mistake them

**XV.** for religious dispositions; thereby turning at the blessings of heaven, and rendering the provision of them, as much as they can, in vain.

3dly, This should lead us to the practice of universal virtue; that thereby we may be the better prepared for, and have the more lively relish of, future happiness, to which every vicious disposition must be quite unlike, if not totally averse. And the revelation of christianity gives us no reason to expect any farther trial; no not even so much as what the Papists have invented, by purgatory; but on the contrary teaches, that "it is appointed unto" "men once to die, but after this the judgment." This is all the transition, all the connection that we know of; and not to be prepared for this, is consummate madness and folly.

4thly, This doctrine of the present world being a state of probation for another, is the strongest argument that may be, that we have no power over our own lives, or the lives of our neighbours. There have been a set of *Philosophers*, indeed, who have foolishly boasted of such a power

<sup>a</sup> Heb. ix. 27.

<sup>b</sup> The Stoics.



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over themselves, as an argument of their liberty, and a security against all evil and pain. And indeed, as I have already observed, if this world was our only state of existence, no one could contend it with them. But as it is, self-murder is the most rude and unjustifiable contempt of the present trial God has given us. It is a direct refusal to do the duty he requires of us, and to fill up the stations he has placed us in. It is telling him to his face that he requires too hard a task of us; is arraigning both his wisdom and goodness, and taking the reins of government out of his hands. It is rushing into his immediate presence before the time: And is a crime for which there can be no room for repentance, nor possibility of a reformation. And therefore, though the mercies of God are unlimited, there can be no rational expectation of, or dependance upon them.

MUCH less, have we any power over the lives of our fellow-creatures, except it be merely in necessary self-defence. The case of the magistrate punishing capital offences, is to be excepted. But even here, the utmost tenderness and caution are to be used; and it is not every crime that is to

be

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SEEM to be so severely punished: Many wise and  
 XV. good men have thought it absolutely un-  
 justifiable, excepting only by way of retri-  
 bution in case of murder. But in private  
 men, every kind of assassination, either by  
 themselves or others; and particularly that  
 accursed trade of murder, by which in  
 some countries, men make a livelihood,  
 without entering into the merits of the  
 quarrel or resentment, and even think it  
 dishonourable to decline executing the  
 bloody commission on any reason or mo-  
 tive, is of all others the most outrageous,  
 and inconsistent with the subordination we  
 are in to the sovereign judge, and supreme  
 disposer of every event. A business, which  
 no one would believe a human creature  
 could engage in, if too many such instances  
 among ourselves, and the concurring testi-  
 mony of most travellers, did not extend our  
 credit to it!

NOR have we any right to endanger our  
 own lives, or the lives of others, by the  
 method too much in fashion in most coun-  
 tries, and which is thought by many a  
 very nice point of honour, and that is  
*duelling*. For in both cases, we assume to  
 ourselves the prerogative of God, who is

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the only disposer of life and death, nor can they proceed from any other than the most diabolical disposition, that of revenge. And should we take away the life of a person unprepared, we do all we can to hurry him into everlasting perdition itself. Can this be honour? Or, is it not cruel, that persons in superior stations, who are appointed guardians of the honour of the community, should make it a rule, that their inferior officers refuse not, when challenged to it, to act so brutal a part, on pain of being deprived even of their subsistence? I must do the duty of my profession, and tell them in the name of God, "Who hath said, vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord," that this is utterly subverting the end of all righteous government; and is partaking of the guilt of the blood shed in consequence of it.

BUT though, for these reasons, we have no right to dispose of the lives either of ourselves or others, yet will the doctrine I have advanced, *namely*, RECONCILE us, if we behave well, to the stroke of death in God's good time. It must not indeed make us so desirous

SERMON. **SERMON** of it, as to be careless of our health  
 or lives, is to be to bring it on, for this  
 would be the same crime with what we  
 have been speaking against. But death  
 being nothing else, as it has been repre-  
 sented by the best writers, but a road to  
 the other world; a gate which opens di-  
 rectly into it; a river which divides this  
 from it: It ought rather to be desirable,  
 than odious to us. It is the common lot  
 of all men, and will be the end of our  
 adversities. It is the conclusion of our trial  
 and probation. It is the introduction to  
 that state of perfection, and rest, and hap-  
 piness, which every moral agent has in  
 view; and nothing remains after it, but  
 that sentence which God the righteous  
 Judge shall pronounce by *Jesus Christ*  
 upon all those who have faithfully im-  
 proved this present life. And happy is it  
 for us, that our sentence will be pronounced  
 by so merciful a Being; and that he that  
 judgeth us is the Lord. *Psalm*. All the days  
 " then, of our appointed time, let us wait  
 " till our change come." and then be  
 sincerely and devoutly thankful to God,  
 that he will let us depart in peace. And,

*Lastly.*



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*Lastly*, THAT we may not fall of so happy a consummation, let us take the strictest care that we do not, in the time of life and prosperity, abuse the goodness and long-suffering of God; remembering our Saviour's parable, which he spake concerning "a certain man who had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit well: And if not, then after that, thou shalt cut it down." For, though those who have made a right and proper use of the day of grace, shall be received into the joy of their Lord; those who have abused it, shall be cast, as unprofitable servants, into outer darkness.

• Luke xiii. 6, 7, 8, 9.

Cc

SER.

# SERMON XVI.

Advantages arising from a belief of  
the christian system.

I JOHN i. 4.

*And these things write we unto you, that  
your joy may be full.*

SERM.  
XVI.

**M**Y design in discoursing on these words, is, to show some of the advantages arising from a belief of the christian system. Some of them I say; it being impossible, in the compass of one discourse, to enumerate much less to expatiate upon them all; the whole being such a superlative instance of the consummate wisdom of God, such a full proof of his infinite goodness, and love to the whole human race, as has not only excited the curiosity of "angels," for so the apostle tells us, "to look into it," but as must

fill

fill our hearts " with joy unspeakable and **SERM.**  
 " full of glory," both in the present life, **XVI**  
 and through the endless ages of eter-  
 nity. I must confine myself to a few  
 of the principal, and chiefly the follow-  
 ing.

- I. THE doctrine of forgiveness of sins;  
 with the easy conditions of it.
- II. THE sensible proof it has given us  
 of a future state, in the resurrection  
 of *Jesus Christ* from the dead.
- III. THE rational worship of God which  
 it enjoins; together with a total era-  
 dication of all superstition and enthu-  
 siasm.
- IV. THE strong confirmation it gives us  
 of the truth of every principle of na-  
 tural, as well as revealed religion, in  
 the attestation given to the divine  
 mission of our Lord and his apostles.
- V. AND lastly, the universality of this  
 religion, which was intended for the  
 benefit of all mankind.

I. THE doctrine of forgiveness of sins,  
 with the conditions of it, will appear to  
 be

Cc 2

SERMON. be of great, and inestimable advantage, as  
 XVI. laid down in the gospel. For it is not there  
 laid down, as a loose and vague principle,  
 applied to all men, the hardened as well as  
 the penitent, those who continue in their  
 sins, as well as those who detest and for-  
 sake them; which would indeed render it  
 a very mischievous and dangerous doctrine,  
 and be utterly inconsistent with all the per-  
 fections of God. But it is delivered in such  
 a manner, as to be the strongest discour-  
 agement to vice, and the most forcible  
 motive to virtue and goodness, acknowledg-  
 ing, and being founded in, the eternal and  
 immutable difference of things, which in  
 moral actions is the propriety, and impro-  
 priety, of the conduct of men. For it is  
 absolutely inseparable from repentance;  
 that is, from a sense of the natural defor-  
 mity and odiousness of vice, and from re-  
 formation and amendment of life.

THOUGH the doctrine of forgiveness of  
 sins upon repentance, is a principle of na-  
 tural justice and equity, and so our Lord  
 represents it in the parable of the prodigal  
 son, "It was meet," we ought, or it was  
 our duty "to make merry, and be glad:

For



"For this thy brother was dead, and is  
"alive again; was lost, and is found : " "

Yet, considering the doubts and apprehensions which naturally arise in the mind conscious of guilt, it cannot but be considered as a very great and inestimable favour, to be relieved, and made easy on this head, by a messenger from God himself; especially on the easy terms on which it is granted by the gospel.

THIS will appear in a very strong light, if we consider what troublesome sacrifices, and expensive offerings the *Jews* were prescribed; and what the natural fears and apprehensions of the *heathens* led them into, on that account. They seem all of them willing to appease the Deity " with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil; " Nay, to " give their first-born for their transgression, the fruit of their body, for the sin of their soul. " "

And in some countries, and on some occasions, the *Gentiles* have actually done the last, making their children to pass through the fire to *Moloch*. Nay, even where they did not run such unnatural lengths; the confusion, ignorance, and uncertainty they

SERMON. they laboured under, will appear, from the  
 XVI. strange and contradictory methods of their  
 worship. Some have sacrificed one animal,  
 while others have thought it an abomina-  
 tion. Some have worshipped with music  
 and dancing; others with shrieks and howl-  
 ing, and cutting and lacerating themselves.  
 And indeed, most of the *heathen* rites we  
 have any account of, seem to show that  
 they looked upon their gods, as cruel, re-  
 vengeful beings, not easily appeased, but  
 much greater strangers to mercy, than to  
 justice.

AND who can wonder at this, that ob-  
 serves the terrors of a like kind, among the  
 professors of the gracious dispensation of the  
 gospel itself; notwithstanding the merciful  
 declarations of forgiveness therein, and of  
 the placability of the divine nature? How-  
 ever, neither natural religion, nor christia-  
 nity, are the less true on this account. The  
 common people will generally believe as  
 they are taught, or as they are wrought  
 upon by the *panics* of others around them.  
 And, while their priests could find the  
 sweets, and advantages of the costly offer-  
 ings drawn from them, their fears would  
 certainly be kept awake, and the gods be  
 clothed

cloathed in all the terrors in which their **Ser. 12.**  
ministers could dress them out. It will be **KVI.**  
the same in every country, where the teach-  
ers of religion are wicked enough to make  
a livelihood of the dreadful despair they  
ostentimes drive their profelytes into.

**BUT**, it is the peculiar happiness of the  
christian dispensation, that there is no oc-  
casion to be misled by any, be they ever so  
crafty and designing. All men may see  
what the gospel says upon the subject, and  
that it is calculated to silence these horrors,  
to allay such fears, and quiet the tremb-  
ling, frightened, desponding mind.

To this purpose, christianity is called the  
gospel; and the angel of the Lord, when  
he appeared to the shepherds, and revealed  
to them the birth of Christ, explained the  
nature of it, by telling them, he brought  
unto them, "good tidings of great joy  
"which should be to all people." The  
name *Jesus*, or Saviour, was given to  
Christ, because "he should save his peo-  
ple from their sins:" And another  
name given to the gospel, is that of *grace*,  
or *favour*; thereby expressly declaring the  
good-

**Cc 4** good-  
ad. **Luke ii. 10.** **Matt. i. 21.** **John i. 17.**



good-will of God to mankind : In which sense it is likewise called a *New Testament*, or more properly a *New Covenant*, of which *Jesus Christ* is appointed the mediator. By these passages the whole of the system is to be understood ; and every expression which may seem to convey any other meaning, must be interpreted by them.

We shall see how tender the gospel is in this regard, by attending to the meaning of some other phrases. The frightened penitent is naturally apt to think he has a very bad cause of his own, is diffident how to plead it, and dreads to look his Judge in the face. To make him easy then on this head, *Jesus Christ* is appointed to be an *advocate* for him ; that is, not only to plead, or to represent the cause of the penitent to his Father ; but to give to the reclaimed the pleasure, and satisfaction to know, that it is graciously heard, and his repentance accepted : For the original word signifies *both*, an advocate and a comforter ; being the same which is used for the Holy Spirit, when in the *New Testa-*



ment; he is called the comforter. Again, the penitent is apt to dread the offended majesty of heaven; to fear that God will never be reconciled, and to despair of being able himself, to render him propitious. In this terrifying circumstance, our blessed Saviour appears as a *propitiation* for him, declaring, that "God is in him reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." For though a propitiation carries with us the idea of a propitiatory sacrifice, (and so in every reasonable sense the death of Christ is,) yet the word, as used in the *New Testament*, is taken from, and indeed signifies, *the mercy-seat*; from whence God Almighty, under the law, declared himself propitious, and appeared in the cloud to receive the sacrifice of atonement for the people.

Thus likewise, when the sinner considers himself as "sold under sin," and thereby captivated, and enslaved, or in danger of everlasting misery and destruction; *Jesus Christ*

1 Cor. 3. 19. 1 Tim. 2. 6. 17.

The words signifying propitiatory, and to be propitious, both in the *Hebrew* and the *Greek*, are words of the same import, though not always accurately rendered in translations. כפר, כפר, *לאתון*, *לאתון*, *לאתון*.

SEN M. *Christ is appointed as a ransom*; a *redemption*;

XVI. a *saviour*. God Almighty thus graciously

conforming to the ordinary apprehensions of mankind; proportioning the means of grace to the kind ends of forgiveness of sin, and receiving the penitent to his mercy: For to this purpose, the scripture tells us, Christ is appointed to all these offices. From all which, we may be assured of the truth and certainty of whatever he has promised to us on God's part, and the firm reliance we may repose in him.

For, these expressions are not merely metaphorical, but as strictly true under the gospel, as under the law of *Moses*. The death of Christ, is as truly a *propitiatory sacrifice*, as any sacrifice whatsoever. For no sacrifice could, in the reason and nature of the thing, render God more propitious and reconcileable than he was in himself. But, as it was necessary for men to have, and to express, proper dispositions of mind; that is, to be sensible of the heinousness of their crimes, sorry for them, and disposed, and resolved to amend them; God enjoined the *Jews* to offer up a sacrifice, by way of such acknowledgment, once every year; and

and from the mercy-seat, declared his acceptance of it: So, he has done the same by us; only with this difference, that we need not repeat it every year; Christ having done it for us once for all. Which the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews* very justly argues, is one of the chief excellencies of the gospel, over the law. S. 1. 18. XVI.

VERY properly then, may the christian dispensation be called a *New Covenant*; and Christ, the *mediator* of it. For he has taken upon himself, to transact the whole between God and us: And by him God has covenanted, and given us a direct and absolute promise, to receive us to favour upon repentance: So that no farther doubt about it can possibly remain. It seems to me therefore, highly presumptuous to enter into any contests, whether God wanted an atonement; whether the honour of his justice would permit him to forgive sins without full satisfaction; and whether the salvation of mankind could have been effected by any other means than by the death of Christ.—What is mortal man, that he should dare to pry into the councils of sovereign wisdom, or vainly dictate to omnipotence!

*Heb. x. at the beginning.*



SERMON. nipotence! — It is sufficient for *Us*, that  
 XVI. the scheme of salvation laid before us in  
 the revelation of christianity, is the covenant of God: And it highly becomes us, to leave to himself the manner in which he chooses to express it. Our business is, thankfully to embrace it, to be reconciled to him, and humbly fulfil our part by all future obedience; our reason and judgment by no means rising in rebellion against it.

THIS doctrine of forgiveness of sins, is not to be supposed to relate to the present life, delivering us from the temporal consequences of them, or from the curse of death incurred thereby; so far from it, that in those respects it leaves us just where we were: It recovers not the soundness of a constitution impaired thereby; it restores not the possessions we have squandered away; nor interposes with the civil magistrate, to absolve us from the punishments due to us by our disobedience to the laws of society. But it relates merely to the future life, in which the penitent shall be received to everlasting happiness.

ANOTHER inestimable advantage, therefore, of a belief of the christian system, is:



II. THE sensible proof it has given us of a future state, in the resurrection of *Jesus Christ* from the dead.

SEAM.  
XVI.

THAT this world is not to be the only state of our existence, but that there will be a future life of rewards and punishments, has been taught by many wise men, merely upon principles of reason: And the arguments for it have never been so thoroughly refuted, as to make it probable that there can, or will be none. *Law-givers* have prefaced their *institutions* with exhortations to believe it, and live under the influence of it. *Philosophers* have reasoned finely about it, and represented it in the most engaging manner, in nobly-devised *visions*, and *dreams*; and *Poets* in descriptions of the descent of their heroes into the infernal regions. By which, lessons of the most exalted virtue have been taught, and the most useful precepts established: Men have been dissuaded from vice, and led to apprehend the most dreadful consequences from it. Whoever doubts, whether it be a principle of reason, or not, need only be sent to the best writers of antiquity for conviction. And to suspect, or alledge that they did not themselves believe what

SERMON they taught, is to shake at least, if not quite overthrow, the credit due to all the past records of time; and those who entertain such suspicions, do no great honour to their own sincerity, but greatly tempt one to suspect it.

BUT, christianity has given us a new, and additional proof of it, which no lawgiver, or philosopher ever attempted, or pretended to, or indeed could by any means have rendered plausible. For, in truth, notwithstanding the strong arguments for a future state, from the vanity of the present life, the nature of the soul, its state of probation, and the perfections of God; yet, when we see men dying round about us; their bodies gradually decaying, and at length remaining before us motionless and unactive; and at last putrifying, and mouldring into dust: There is no one, however convinced of a future state, but must pause a little at this appearance; and it difficult to account for the soul's existing without a body; and yet not be more easily able to conceive, how that body, which to all appearance had absolutely perished, could be again collected, and re-animated with vigour and motion.

BUT if in the midst of these doubts (for they can only be doubts, difficult in-  
deed, but not impossible to resolve) I say, XVI

if in the midst of these doubts, any one should come from the great Author of nature, and should preach up the practice of virtue, exciting us to it from the consideration of a future state, for the happiness of which virtue alone could prepare us; and should, in confirmation of the truth of what he said, foretell the manner of his own death; and appeal to his resurrection from the dead, and appearance again, and conversing with us familiarly for many days: With what impatience should we expect the fulfilment of his prediction? And how readily would our doubts vanish away, when we actually saw it fulfilled before our eyes? It would be the most convincing proof it was possible for us ever to imagine; and it would be impossible the least doubt should ever again return.

THIS is what God Almighty, in infinite goodness and compassion, has graciously condescended to exhibit to mankind in the resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ from the dead: Not indeed to every individual; nor in every age of christianity;

but

# 400 Advantages arising from a belief

SEYM. but once for all, before "chosen witnesses,"

XVI. "who did eat and drink with him, after

he rose from the dead." For, if this

evidence was to be perpetually given, to

every man, and upon every occasion, it

would be utterly inconsistent with that

principle of faith, by which christians are

tried, and rendered meet for the glory of

the invisible world. But, if they have a

proper frankness and simplicity of disposi-

tion, and are open to reasonable convic-

tion, the testimony of such "chosen wit-

nesses," will answer the same religious

end, as if they had seen the resurrection of

Jesus with their own eyes. This is the

doctrine of scripture, as we may learn from

that passage of our Saviour, "Thomas, be-

cause thou hast seen me, thou hast be-

lieved: Blessed are they that have not

seen, and yet have believed."

We have an instance in the *Old Testa-*

*ment* of the recovery of a person from

death; and that is, the son of the *Samar-*

*itan* woman by *Elijah*: And of several per-

sons in the *New Testament*, namely *Tirsis*'s

daughter, the young man nigh the gate

of

<sup>a</sup> *Acts* x. 41.

<sup>b</sup> *John* xx. 29.

<sup>c</sup> *Mark* v. 41.



of the city called *Nazareth* and *Lazarus* the friend of Christ: To these last instances our Saviour refers the disciples of *John*, as proofs of his being the person *John* sent them to enquire after. And the reason of his working such extraordinary miracles is very obvious; namely, because not only some of the *heathens*, but the *Sadducees*, a very considerable sect among the *Jews*, denied the possibility of a resurrection. But these were only intended as proofs of his being the person that should "come," which was the question *John* was solicitous about, that is the *Messiah*; but are not appealed to as evidences for a future state.

BUT the resurrection of Christ was evidently intended for that purpose; and moreover to acquaint us with some circumstances relating to it, impossible to be known by the light of nature. Namely, that "God had appointed a day in the which he would judge the world in righteousness," and that this judgment was committed to him. For the reason of his conversing so familiarly with "the

D d 10 cho-

<sup>a</sup> Luke vii. 12.

<sup>b</sup> John xi. 39.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. xi. 5.

<sup>d</sup> Ab. xvii. 30.

## Advantages arising from a belief

"chosen witnesses" after it, as we have seen was, as he himself "commanded them, that they might preach unto the people, and testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead," and likewise was the person according to the preceding head of this discourse, "to whom give all the prophets witness, that through his name who-soever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." So naturally, and firmly, are these two doctrines connected together.

THIS shows the great fitness and propriety of his dying in so publick, however ignominious, a manner upon the cross, and of the time selected for it, namely the feast of the Passover, when Jerusalem was crowded with people from all parts. Such a publick execution could not fail of drawing together an exceeding large concourse of them, who would all be witnesses that he really died; and consequently, that his resurrection was no forgery or delusion, but an immediate and miraculous work of God. And the reason why his resurrection was not made as publick (which many look upon as a manifest proof of the falsity

# of the christian system.

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SEEM.

XVI.

of it) seems, to me, to arise very fully and properly from the state and condition of the Jews at that time, who were a conquered people, under subjection to the Romans. Had "all the people" then, in such circumstances, upon seeing Christ openly, been persuaded, he was their Messiah, who, they falsely imagined was to have been a temporal Prince; they might, especially the lower and unthinking part of them, have run into very dangerous confusions, expecting an immediate deliverance, which, if they had been crushed (and there is no reason to believe but what they would have been crushed) must have prevented the other nations of the world from ever having the tenders of the gospel made to them—That there is sufficient proof however of the fact, will appear under the fifth head of this discourse, when I come to show the universality of the religion founded upon it.

This advantage arising from a belief of the christian system, will explain to us the meaning of that passage of the apostle, that "Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel;"

D d 2

which



SERM. which some have interpreted; as if there  
 XVI. could have been no knowledge, or at least  
 no strong proof of it, before. But this is absolutely contradicted by facts. However, it is apparent that christianity has given us a new proof, or in the language of that text, thrown a new *light*, or *illustration* upon it, which no sophistry, or false reasoning, while the fact stands uncontested, will be able to evade. And both in this, and the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins upon repentance, the inestimable grace and goodness of God is manifest to every serious, and well disposed mind.

FROM both which arises another advantage; such as no law-giver, or publick instructor ever had before, and that is, that *Jesus Christ*, who has incontestably assured us of the truth of both, is appointed by God to confer the benefits of them upon us. Nothing in the world can be more idle than to talk of any other law-giver making a future state of rewards and punishments the sanction of his laws. What signifies a sanction he has not in his power

\* To bring to light, is by no means the meaning of the word *pariyo*, but as I have explained it, to enlighten, illuminate, or illustrate.



to put in execution? It must render him ridiculous, and weaken his authority, and the reverence due to his character. But *Jesus Christ* has full power to do so, to whom "all judgment is committed by the Father," in consideration of what he has thus done, and suffered for mankind. This has very properly been called by divines his *mediatorial kingdom*, which, at the final consummation of all things, "he shall deliver up to the Father, that God may be all in all."

As we have seen that the two important doctrines already mentioned, of the forgiveness of sins, and a future state, are founded in reason; but much more perfectly explained, and illustrated by the christian system, no wonder if we reap another advantage by it, viz.

III. THE rational worship of God which it enjoins, together with a total eradication of all superstition and enthusiasm.

THE adorable object of all religious worship, is the Creator, Governor, and Disposer of all things: Of whose perfections we cannot but entertain the highest reverence.

<sup>a</sup> John v. 22.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 24.

# 406 Advantages arising from a belief

SAMUEL JOHNSON. For whose goodness we cannot but

**XVII** conceive the warmest gratitude: And on

whose providence it is absolutely impossible

not to be sensible of our dependance. Hence

then naturally result the duties of adora-

tion, of thanksgiving for favours we have

already received, and of prayer for those

we stand in need of: And to express them

in acts of devotion, is nothing else but to

cloath our inward sentiments in language,

that noble gift of God, by which he has

distinguished us from the inferior parts of

his creation! If we are serious in these sen-

timents, we shall not easily avoid expressing

them among our friends, and fellow crea-

tures, who will infallibly entertain the

same; and from hence a *social religion* will

become as natural as any other social act

whatsoever, or even as conversation itself.

And among the benevolent, friendly, and

generous, prayers, and thanksgivings, for as

well as with, one another will burst forth

from a sympathy of heart. Which ought

every where to be encouraged, as the most

likely, and the best means of propagating,

and cultivating universal charity and love.

BUT what has been the fact in the

world? Though, if we look into some an-

cient

dent hymns, and the writings of the chastest *Sermons*  
poets; we shall find very sublime, elevated, **XIV**  
and rational notions of the Divinity: Yet  
as to their common worship, politicians have  
invented and established, such as best suit-  
ed their own civil purposes; and intro-  
duced such rites and usages into it, as  
would best amuse the people, and lead  
them into a subserviency to their schemes.  
From hence the religions of different coun-  
tries have been as different as their genius,  
or their climates. *Demons*, that is the souls  
of departed heroes, have in many places  
been the chief objects of it; statues have  
been erected to their memory, before  
which their religious rites were to be per-  
formed, and that in places consecrated to  
them; where great impurities, intempe-  
rance, and cruelty have sometimes consti-  
tuted the greatest part of it. Such was the  
idolatry of the *Pagan* world. In opposi-  
tion to which God selected the *Jews*, in  
order to preserve the knowledge both of his  
unity and his nature among men; and pre-  
scribed them such a worship as would best  
preserve them separate from idolators;  
mixed however with such positive institu-  
tions, as we cannot easily account for, but



SERM. were undoubtedly intended to answer the  
 XVI. great end of their SEPARATION, as we see  
 it does, all over the world, to this day.  
 And therefore the writers of the *New Testament* never speak of them as of the essence of devotion; but call them "carnal ordinances," a "yoke on their necks," which they were not able to bear,<sup>b</sup> and the like. And how much they mistook the true nature of devotion appears from the contest between the *Jews* and *Samaritans* about the place where they ought to worship; whether at *Jerusalem*, or on mount *Gerizim*; and from their uncharitable behaviour to each other, on account of this dispute.

IN this case, then, our Saviour has taught, that the places which they contended about, had no such holiness in them as they imagined, but that "the hour cometh when neither in that particular mountain, nor yet at *Jerusalem* should men worship; but the true worshippers should worship the Father in spirit and in truth;" giving for it the most plain, and obvious reason that could be, namely, that "God

" is

<sup>a</sup> Heb. ix. 10.

<sup>b</sup> *Mat.* xv. 10.



"is a spirit." The nature of which spiritual worship may be best understood by the divine prayer he himself taught his disciples. S. X. XVI.

ON the same principle we find St. Paul reasoning at *Athens* against the superstition of the *Greeks*, who were so strangely given to the worship of *Demons*, that they had inscribed an altar to the *unknown God*; and erecting the whole of religious worship on the spirituality of the divine nature, and the impossibility for that reason, that he should "dwell in temples made with hands," or desire to be "worshipped with mens hands, as though he needed any thing." And in the precepts he has given for "supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks," he has directed them to the most catholic moral purposes, namely, that they should be "for all men." Thus rational, thus conducive to the best purposes, is the worship of christianity.

It seems, however, impossible to have religious worship without some *positive institutions*. The bulk of the people want some

<sup>a</sup> John iv. 20, 23, 24.

<sup>b</sup> Acts xvii. 24, 25.

<sup>c</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 1.

Some helps to their devotion; some sensible

**XV** subjects to fix their attention. To this the  
 Christianity has conformed; but, in the  
 least degree that may be. It enjoins no  
 thing of this kind, but baptism, the Lord's  
 supper, and offering up our prayers in the  
 name of Christ; for all which the reasons  
 are obvious. By *baptism*, or washing with  
 water, "in the name of the Father, and  
 of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,"  
 we make our solemn entrance into this re-  
 ligion, professing our faith of it, and yield-  
 ing our obedience to its Author. By the  
*Lord's supper*, we celebrate the death of  
 Christ, eating bread, and drinking wine in  
 remembrance of Him; thereby showing  
 that we have not repented of our first so-  
 lemn profession of his religion, nor apo-  
 statized from Him. By *offering up our*  
*prayers*, and *praises in his name*, as the me-  
 diator between God and us, we fulfil our  
 part of the New Covenant, thankfully ac-  
 cepting the forgiveness of sins he has pro-  
 mised on God's part, and being sincerely  
 reconciled to him, on our own. For it  
 must be observed, that though God is re-  
 presented as propitious, "loving us, and  
 sending his son to be the propitiation

for

"for our sins : " Yet, as we were represented as enemies to God by wicked works, & what is expected and required of us, is reconciliation ; which, I say, we declare by offering up our prayers, and praises in the name of the mediator. And by all the three, we are visibly distinguished from the professors of all other religions ; which is one of the wisest reasons that can be given for any positive institutions whatever.

As I have had occasion to observe under the three foregoing heads, that they are all founded in reason ; it will appear a still farther advantage to find,

IV. THAT christianity gives a strong confirmation of the truth of every other principle of natural, as well as revealed religion, in the attestation given to the divine mission of our Saviour, and his apostles. For it has incorporated in it the principles of the unity, and providence, the natural and moral attributes of God ; a future state, and every duty both of private and social virtue. Considered there-

fore  
 1. 1. <sup>1</sup> John iv. 20. <sup>2</sup> Col. i. 21. <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. v. 18,  
 compared with ver. 20.



So far as a system, whatever proves any part of it, proves the whole. To these then, who may not be able to combat with the subtleties of an atheist, or a fatalist, or a man who denies any real difference in nature between virtue and vice; the arguments they bring will have no weight, because our religion teaches the contrary. The evidences for which are the *miracles* wrought by our Lord and his apostles, with the resurrection of Jesus from the dead; all attested by credible and sober witnesses, men of unexceptionable character, who were eye-witnesses, and had no worldly interest to pursue; but, on the contrary, suffered persecution, or death, or both, by bearing their testimony to them.

This indeed is a proof, as it is not exhibited in every age, which some have thought grows weak by length of time, while others imagine it rather increases by the enquiry made into it, and the numbers which, after such enquiry, have given credit to it through many generations. To

This last has been lately espoused by a very learned and ingenious writer, the Rev. Mr. LeMoine, in his *Treatise on Miracles*, p. 352. A book full of a variety of entertaining learning; in which some facts relating to the subject



of the christian system.

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put it out of all doubt, prophecy is added  
as a standing proof in all ages, in which it  
is and shall be fulfilled. And if the people  
in the days of our Saviour and his apostles,  
had an advantage over us in the testimony  
of miracles; we have a great advantage  
over them in that of prophecy. For since  
that time, *Jerusalem* has actually been de-  
stroyed; as our Saviour foretold, the *Jewish*  
policy broken, and the people dispersed  
throughout the world. And with our own  
eyes we see the fulfilment of another pro-  
phesy, in the corruptions of the church of  
*Rome*, as they are circumstantially de-  
scribed in the *New Testament*; namely the  
exorbitant power usurped by the Pope;  
their worshipping of saints; the celibacy of  
the clergy; and their diabolical persecu-  
tions, being drunk with the blood of the  
saints, and with the blood of the martyrs  
of *Jesus*; and making merchandize of  
the  
are cleared up, and mistakes discovered, beyond what any  
other writer has done, or perhaps has had opportunity of  
doing.

<sup>a</sup> 2 *Thes.* ii. 4. The true interpretation of this passage,  
<sup>b</sup> 1 *Tim.* iv. 1. I have given in the *Protestant Cate-  
chism* published in the time of the late rebellion.

<sup>c</sup> 1 *Tim.* iv. 4.

<sup>d</sup> *Rev.* xvii. 6.

SERMON. the bodies, for so it ought to be translated,  
XVI. and souls of men.

I SHALL not enlarge upon this subject of the attestation given to the divine mission of our Saviour and his apostles, as great numbers of the most learned and ingenious writers, have in our time done it ample justice, in answer to the objections made, and difficulties raised against it. I shall only observe, that whoever, upon this evidence, believes christianity, and conforms his life to its precepts, will be universally and impartially religious; as it enjoins every precept of virtue, and substitutes no superstitious or enthusiastical practices in the room of it, but fully proves that the whole is the will of God, and that without the whole, it is impossible to please him.

Rev. xviii. 13. *Suppel.* The relics of supposed saints which they purchase, and the souls they pretend to redeem for money out of purgatory, shows what this merchandize, only applicable to Papists, must mean. This is confirmed by the word in *Hebrew*, and *Latin*, signifying bone, as well as body; for the three words are the same. *ivy. Supel. Ossum. Os.* — This criticism was communicated to me in a conversation on this text by an ingenious gentleman, in whose friendship I think myself happy; the Rev. Dr. *Gregory Sharpe*, to whom I doubt not, but the learned world will think themselves obliged for it.

NOTHING farther then remains to prove the great advantage of this religion; but to show,

V. THE universality of it, and that it was intended for the benefit of all mankind, notwithstanding what some have objected. For, though it does not, in fact, universally prevail, yet it was evidently intended to spread over the face of the whole earth. What else could be meant by the gift of tongues conferred on the apostles in the day of Pentecost, when they were enabled to speak all the languages of the world? Inasmuch that "*Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphilia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Lybia about Cyrene,*" that is, what the moderns call *Africa*, "*and strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians,* devout men out of every nation under heaven, heard them speaking in their tongues wherein they were born, the wonderful works of God;" that is, that "*God raised up Jesus,* having loosed the pains of death, and



Advantages arising from a belief  
SERM. "and made him both Lord and Christ."

XVI. The evidence of which fact was thus given to all the world, and not kept a secret, like the mysteries of the heathens, among any select number of initiated persons. And thus furnished, with the gift of tongues, and with a power of working miracles, and prophesying, the apostles travelled into most of the countries of the then known world, and an amazing number of converts was made.

If it be asked, How it came to lose ground, or not to spread still farther? It is impossible to tell all the occasions that *did* obstruct it, but it is easy to mention many probable ones that *might*. Prejudice, ignorance, vice, attachment to their own superstitions, wherever it might be promulged; jealousies of princes and states, the force and compulsion *Mahomed* and his followers have used to spread *his* religion, but which christianity absolutely forbids.— And then, the influence of it might be as easily obstructed, as that of virtue. While men are free agents, there is no answering for their conduct, or accounting for their obstinacy; nor for the success of any thing which



of the christian system.

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which depends on their own choice. Nothing can be more plainly taught in the revelation of the gospel, than that "God would have ALL MEN to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth;" and the death of Christ is represented as a "propitiation for the sins of the whole world;" and yet, notwithstanding this, there will be many reprobates who cast themselves away. Christianity is not universal, because men are not universally fit for the reception of it. But still, in spite of all opposition, it is foretold, that there will be a time, when the "fullness of the Gentiles shall come in," and "all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ." And for the accomplishment of it, we must wait with patience, and the most humble submission to the unfathomable depths of Providence.

I HAVE now distinctly considered the several advantages I proposed to treat of, which we receive from this divine institution of christianity: And I doubt not but it will appear to be a COMPLETE SYSTEM of

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Advantages arising from a belief religion; that those who are blest with it are a people highly favoured of the Lord; and that there is abundant reason that their "joy should be full."

THE obvious return on our part, is the sincerest love of our heavenly Father, who has sent his eternal Son, "to bless us, and by such gracious methods" to turn us "away from our iniquities;" Love, which our Saviour tells us, is the first and great commandment: It is the foundation of religion: It is that which alone can render religion true, and acceptable with God: And is a principle, from which our obedience to all his other commandments will flow with ease and pleasure from us.

THIS will naturally express itself in gratitude and praises, and beget in us (for such the apostle tells us are "the fruits of the "spirit) "joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance.<sup>b</sup>" Which, meeting together in the same mind, will give a pleasure, like the cheerfulness, that a bright unclouded day gives to the spirits, enlivening the whole constitution: It will be like the refreshment the panting hart meets in the water-

<sup>a</sup> 1st. iii. 26.

<sup>b</sup> Gal. v. 22, 23.

## of the christian system.

water-brooks: Or like the pleasure of a dutiful child in the presence of his tender, indulgent parents: Or the sweet council of familiar friends.

AND as this is a disposition, which will truly, and properly prepare us for the perfection, and happiness of the future state, wherewith this dispensation of christianity has a natural and manifest connection; every sincere believer of it may make the song of *Simeon* the daily prayer of his life, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace! For mine eyes have seen thy salvation: Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people *Israel*!"

*Luke ii. 29. &c.*

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# Critical Dissertation

ON  
I COR. XI. 10.

*For this cause ought the woman to have  
power on her head because of the angels.*

First published in the YEAR 1742.

**N**EXT to proving the truth of the christian religion, vindicating it from objections, explaining its doctrines, and enforcing its precepts; one cannot do it a more useful service, than by clearing up those passages in the books of it, that appear intricate and difficult, that have perplexed the learned as well as the ignorant; and, after a variety of interpretations, remain as difficult as ever.

THAT there are such passages in the sacred writings, is no objection to their authority. Different idioms of languages, customs



customs of countries, vulgar opinions, and divers other causes, will give an obscurity to many things in after-times, and to people of other nations, that were extremely clear and easy, when they were written. A fondness for mysterious and sublime interpretations makes many overlook, or reject, and sometimes even despise, the plain and simple meaning: And when a thing has been long thought difficult and obscure, one is apt to despair of ever understanding it. There is too, among many, a vicious fear of going out of the beaten road, and a dread that a new explication may be dangerous to the faith: And I know not what ridiculous pride makes some, who fancy themselves singularly learned, look down with contempt on what is advanced by others, as if themselves only were the people, and wisdom was to die with them."

THE passage I propose to offer an interpretation of, has been thought extremely difficult by most commentators. Mr. *Locke* frankly acknowledges, he knows not what to make of it; nor so much as offers a conjecture about it: And *Beza*, though he mentions two opinions from other writers,

with the same ingenuity confesses that neither of them satisfies him: Nor will the meanings that have been put on it by others convey any rational ideas, or do the least honour to the apostle.

THAT what is translated *power*, which "the woman ought to have on her head," signifies a *Veil*, every body agrees; and in some versions it is rendered, *Velamen*, *testatis indicium*; *une enseigne*, or *une marque, qu'elle est sous puissance*; and by our first reformer *Wickliffe*, *therefore the womman schal have an bilyng on her heed also for aungelis*. This being agreed, it is not much matter, with regard to the sentiment, whether the original be, as in the usual editions of the *New Testament*, *Εξουα*, or as others would alter it, *Εξουσια*; since either of them is equally a sign of the superiority of the man; and that is all the apostle is solicitous to support.

THE Veil was very early introduced into the world, and universally worn, as a token of subjection. *Tertullian*<sup>b</sup> is of opinion that it was prescribed in paradise, immediately after the fall. Be that as it will, we read of it as early as the patriarchal

<sup>a</sup> Vid. Gothofred.

<sup>b</sup> De veland. virgin.

times in scripture. *Abimelech*, king of *Gerar*, refers to it when he reproves *Sarah* for passing herself upon him for *Abraham's* sister instead of his wife, "Behold he is to thee a covering of the eyes unto all that are with thee, and to all other." *Rebecca* upon her first seeing *Isaac* at a distance, to whom she was betrothed, as soon as the servant told her "it was his master," therefore, "because she was betrothed to him," took a veil and covered herself, out of modesty and deference. And when we read that *Tamar* did the same thing, with an intent to seduce her father-in-law, we are not to suppose it was ever a sign of lewdness, or part of the dress of an harlot, though *Judah* immediately took her to be one; for he was led to think her so, because she sat with it "in an open place;" and it was impossible for him to see who she was, "because she had covered her face."

It was used likewise among the *Greeks* on the same account. When *Helen* was conducted by *Iris* to view the combat between

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Gen. xx. 16. Chap. xxiv. 65. Chap.  
xxxviii. 14, 15.



tween her husband *Meneleus*, and *Paris*,  
*Homér* says,

Αὐτίκα δ' ἀργημένοι καλυψαμένη ὀδύσσει,  
 Ὀφίαιτ' ἐκ θαλάμοιο, τέρεν κατὰ δαίμονα  
 χέουσα.

And when *Thetis*, after revolving in her mind the death of her son *Achilles*, was summoned to a consultation of the gods by the same messenger, after her reply to the summons, he adds,

Σὺς ἀρὰ φωνήσασα, καλυμμένη εἰς δία θρόνον  
 Κλυμένην.

AMONGST the Romans too, the word *Nupta*, a married woman, literally signifies "one covered with a veil," *a nubere* *se* to be covered; whence *Robertus* *Strohm*, though perhaps he is mistaken in deriving *Nupta a nube*, tells us, *sunt qui dicunt virum sum nubere, quam servit uxori, velut illa potius vir sit quam ille*. And *Martial* has a pretty epigram on the same thought,

Uxorem



*Uxorē quare totāpletem ducere nolo.  
 Quod idē? luxuri mēbere nolo mōit.  
 Inferior maritō suo sit, Prisce, marito.  
 Non aliter fuerint quēdā virque parēs.  
 Lib. 8. 12.*

FROM whence we see the propriety of the word *ἐξουσία*, which the apostle uses in the passage before us, the reason of the woman's wearing the veil being the same in all countries; the Hebrew word likewise *רָדָה* (*radah*) the root, from whence comes *רָדָה* (*radah*) a verb, signifying to rule, or subdue. Isa. xlv. 1. "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue *רָדָה* (*radah*) nations before him. In the septuagint it is *ἐξουσία*. What is stronger to the purpose, Ps. cxlv. 2. *רָדָה* (*radah*) is translated *ἐξουσία*. And therefore, *ἐξουσία* is the most literal translation of it into the language in which the apostle was writing.

Now this part of their habit, upon some pretence or other, the Corinthian women had taken it into their heads to throw off in their christian assemblies, either

wholly,

wholly, or at least while they themselves were performing whatever part belonged to them. The latter of which is most probable from the apostle's specifying their *praying and prophesying*, which were only parts of their religious exercises: But in what manner they relate to the women, is somewhat difficult to determine.

It will be no violence to the first expression, if we understand it only of their attendance on the publick prayers of the church; for tho' one alone uttered, or repeated them with an audible voice, yet he was the mouth of the congregation, it was properly the act of them all. But we cannot, altogether consistently with accuracy and propriety of speech, call their attendance on the prophesying or preaching of the men, by the name of *prophesying*; and perhaps it will be more easy to find out what their prophesying was not, than what it actually was.

BEFORE the apostle has done with the argument he is upon, he says, chap. xiv. 34. "Let your women keep silence in the churches," and gives as a reason for it, what seems to be no new precept, but well known among them, "for it is not permitted

" unto

unto them to speak; which was by no means true, if the prophesying to which he refers in the passage before us, and which was evidently their duty, consisted of any thing properly called *speaking* in the church, whether it was *teaching*, or *exhortation*, or *foretelling future events*. These then, I think must be intirely put out of the question.

INDEED, the prophet *Joel* foretells that the spirit of the Lord shall be poured out upon all flesh without exception; upon old and young, and upon the servants, and upon the hand-maids, chap. ii. 28, 29. and particularly mentions that their sons, and their daughters shall prophesy: And St. Peter applies this passage to the effusion of the Holy Ghost in the day of Pentecost, *Acts* ii. 17, &c. But yet it by no means appears for certain, from that history of the descent of the Holy Ghost, whether the apostles did any thing more, themselves, at that time, than speak with tongues the wonderful works of God; or whether there were any women present among them or no; or whether all that were with one accord



"ord in our place," *Isa. xl. 1*, refers only  
 "to the twelve," mentioned in the last verse  
 of the preceding chapter; or to "the  
 hundred and twenty" in *ver. 15*; and  
 whatever opinion any one may have of  
 these things, can arise only from conjecture,  
 and the greatest probability as it appears  
 to him. So that I do not see, that either  
 of these passages will determine any of the  
 particulars we are inquiring after. And  
 indeed *Isaiah's* prophecy seems to be a gene-  
 ral description of the happiness of the evan-  
 gelical state; like what *Isaiah* tells us, "all  
 thy children shall be taught of the Lord;  
 or *Jeremiah*, "and they shall teach no  
 more every man his neighbour, and  
 every man his brother, saying, know the  
 Lord, for they shall all know me from  
 the least of them to the greatest of them,  
 saith the Lord;" but was very properly  
 applied to by *St. Peter* on that occasion,  
 generals including the particulars.

But though this will by no means deter-  
 mine what the women's prophesying "in  
 the church" was; that will not prove,  
 they had no such gifts in private. Among  
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\* *Is. liv. 13. Jer. xxxi. 34.*



the Jews, though it does not appear that any of their prophets exercised their gift, or performed any office, in their synagogues, or religious assemblies; yet we find some of them had the gift of foretelling future events, and were applied to for that purpose; particularly *Huldah* the wife of *Shallum*, to whom king *Josiah* sent even the high-priest, as well as other officers of his court, "to inquire concerning the words of the book of the law which was found in the house of the Lord;" and her answer foretold the accomplishment of the evil which God would "bring upon the place, and upon the inhabitants thereof." It might be the same among the christian women; they might have the gift of prophecy, either foretelling future events, or instructing, and edifying their own houses, or their neighbours; and yet not be allowed to perform any of these things in the church.

AND so we find, though the apostle gives as a reason why the women were not to speak "in the church, that they might not usurp authority over the man," yet he supposes they might have such an effect

\* 2 Kings xxii. 16.

\* 1 Tim. ii. 12.

effect by their private conversation, and behaviour, on their own husbands at home, as to convert them to the faith. The “unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife—what knowest thou O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?” I presume, in this protestant country, I need not add, it could not be by works of supererogation, but merely by instruction and example, as St. Peter explains it, “Likewise ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word, be won by the conversation of the wives.”

I THINK then we may safely allow, that the women might exercise these gifts of prophecy “out of the church,” though there is no proof that they did, there being but one place in the *New Testament* where any mention is made of womens prophesying, and that is, “of the four daughters of Philip the evangelist, virgins, that did prophesy,” but neither will this help us to any particulars, that will clear up the passage before us.

a 1 Cor. vii. 14—16.

c Acts xxi. 9.

b 1 Pet. iii. 1.

It being plain however from thence, that the women did *prophecy* "in the church," and equally plain that they were not allowed to *speak* there; we must inquire whether there was any sort of prophesying that was performed in any other manner than by *speaking*; and as Mr. Mede has very learnedly proved that one species of prophesying was *singing psalms*; that seems to be the only thing left, that can be here applied to the *Corinthian* women; and is a custom which has been kept up in all ages of the church, by men and women promiscuously, to this day.

I would advise the reader to peruse Mr. Mede's masterly discourse upon the subject. But that the thread of this dissertation may not be lost, I will just mention the reasons by which he supports it.

They are drawn from the following passages of scripture, *Exod. xv. 21, 22,* "And *Miriam* the *prophetess* the sister of *Aaron* took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And *Miriam* answered them, sing ye to the Lord, &c." And *1 Sam. x. 5* and *10*, "Thou shalt



“ shalt meet a company of prophets coming  
 “ down from the high place, with a psal-  
 “ tery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a  
 “ harp before them, and they shall pro-  
 “ phesy—and when they came thither  
 “ to the hill, a company of prophets met  
 “ him, and the spirit of God came upon  
 “ him, and he prophesied among them.”

Now, that this prophesying was “ singing  
 “ the praises of God” to the dumb, &c. is evident from 1 Chron. xv. 19, 20, and 3. “ Moreover David and the  
 “ captains of the host separated to the  
 “ service, of the sons of *Asaph*, and of  
 “ *Heman*, and of *Jeduthun*, who should  
 “ prophesy with harps, with psalteries,  
 “ and with cymbals—who prophesied  
 “ with a harp” “ to give thanks and to  
 “ praise the Lord.” And this seems to be  
 the particular gift of *Deborah*, who is  
 stiled a prophetess, as is probable from  
 her memorable triumphal song, *Judg.* v.  
 So *Anna* the prophetess gave thanks unto the  
 Lord, *Luke* ii. 38; the word *gave thanks*,  
 here used, looks as if here was a kind of  
 response to that of *Simon* in the preceding  
 verses; for if we consider the thanksgiv-  
 ings, or triumphal songs in the *Old Testa-*  
*ment,*



ment, we shall find they are generally disposed in that manner, into parts, and a chorus; which seems to be the meaning of *Miriam's* "answering" *them*, in the passage just quoted; and from which, in all likelihood, the responses in our liturgy take their origin.

Now it is very evident, that "singing" "psalms" was one of the gifts of the Spirit, from 1 Cor. xiv. 26. Col. iii. 16. Eph. v. 19; and therefore the apostle's speaking of the "*prophefying of women in the churches*," is extremely proper, though they did nothing else but "sing by the Spirit." And this sense of prophefying is farther confirmed, from the *Latin* word *vaticinari*, signifying both to prophefy, and compose verses.

I CHOSE to crowd these things together in the manner I have; the bounds of this dissertation not allowing me to enlarge, as *Mr. Mede* has done.

If these then were the only exercises in which the women properly bore a part; it will not be easy to suppose, as some have done, that their throwing off the Veil, was in imitation of the *Bazχισαι*, or *Πεδισαι* among the heathens; there being nothing in the christian worship similar to the in-

spirations, or raptures these prophetesses pretended to,

*afflata est numine quando  
Jam propiore Dei.*

and it is impossible but they must be instructed, that it was quite the reverse of any thing similar.

It is more probable that it arose from a mistaken notion, that christianity had abrogated the superiority of the man, and put the sexes on a level: At least it would furnish some kind of pretence, and might in time, and by degrees, introduce a scheme for that purpose. And *that* would have been a thing of very mischievous consequence; not only as it was contrary to the order of nature, and the express appointment of God immediately after the fall; but as it would hinder the propagation of the gospel, by preventing *men* from embracing a religion, which took, or was supposed to take, away their great prerogative. Whoever remembers *Livie's* account of the spirit with which the *Roman* ladies prosecuted, and at length obtained, the abrogation of the *Oppian* law, will

not wonder if these made a trial for it at least.

AND I am the rather induced to think the *Corinthian* women might have gone into this opinion, from the pains the apostle takes to prove the superiority of the man, before he comes to speak of the propriety of the woman's shewing the badge of subjection, as well in the immediate presence of God, who compassionately beholds all his creatures with an equal regard, as upon any other occasion; "I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God." If they had thrown it off from any other motive, it would have been sufficient for him to have exposed their indecency, as in the subsequent verses, without tracing up his argument to so high an original. Particularly, it seems to be nothing at all to the purpose, if they did it in imitation of the priestesses that have been mentioned.

AND it is remarkable what care the apostles, in general, take to establish this doctrine of the subjection of the woman, at the same time that they lay down the most strong and forcible precepts of a lov-



ing, affectionate, and tender usage on the side of the man; who is barely the superior, not a tyrant; and to whom, though the woman must obey, she is not to carry her regard to excess, or, as the apostle expresses it, "to be afraid with any amazement." And indeed none but a person of very brutal, savage disposition would take advantage of this superiority to treat what God has created for his help, and succour, and called *his own flesh*, with roughness and severity. *Plutarch* very genteely compares this superiority to "the soul's governing the body, to which it is united by mutual love and affection;"

κρατειν δε δει τον ανδρα της γυναικος θυξαις δεσποτην κτηματος, αλλα ως ψυχης σωματος, συμπαθουντα και συμπρονοηται τη ευνοια. Γαμ. παρθενια.

**T**HE superiority of the man then, and the reason of the woman's wearing the Veil, being established, before I proceed to shew why the woman should keep it on in the religious assemblies *because of the angels*, δια τους αγγελους, to explain which



which is the principal design of this dissertation; I shall inquire into the nature of the apostle's reasoning in this place, which has been thought one of the most difficult parts of his epistles.

The argument for the superiority of the man seems plain and obvious; and therefore it is needless to make any observations upon it: But there are two things which seem more difficult, and which therefore it will be worth while to examine into, namely,

How "Nature teaches, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him, but if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her;" and

How "a man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head."

As to the first. The *nature* which the apostle says teaches this, cannot be supposed to be that nature which dictates the same passions and sentiments to all; nor can it be meant of the natural length of a man's hair, nothing which nature does, which is infinitely various in her operations, being properly a shame to any one; for to suppose *that*, would be a reflexion on

the Author of nature. On the contrary, it is mentioned as an instance of the beauty of *Absalom*; the largeness of his hair, "In all *Israel* there was none to be so much praised as *Absalom*, for his beauty: From the sole of his foot, even to the crown of his head, there was no blemish in him. And when he polled his head (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: Because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight;" which, if we compute by *Hebrew* weights, was no less than a hundred *Roman* ounces; or if, as others will have it, by *Babylonian* weights, the book being supposed to be wrote in the time of the *Babylonish* captivity, thirty three ounces and one third.

By nature therefore must be here meant *custom*, which in most places passes for nature; and is so commonly used in speech among all people, that it would be idle to bring quotations in proof of it. Nor does *εὐχρηστος*, here translated "have long hair," signify the natural length of a man's hair, but an artificial, effeminate, manner of nourish-

nourishing, and dressing it; and so others render it *comam nutrire*; *si l'homme nourrit sa chevelure*: And there is this difference, and *Constantine* quotes a passage of *Artemodorus* to prove it, between *κομη* and *τριχωμα*, that one signifies, hair adorned or put in order, the other, hair neglected or uncomb'd; from whence, *κομαω* is sometimes used for *superbia*².

Now customs are good, or bad, according to what they express. *Homer* describes the *Grecians* by the very contrary singularity to what the apostle alludes to in this place, *κατακομωτες Αχαιοι*. Which appears to me to be from the care they took of their hair before they went to battle, not that they might appear more terrible to the enemy, as some have thought; for it is extremely strange, that what rendered them lovely in the eyes of one sex, should render them so much the reverse in the eyes of the other; but, to shew the serenity with which they went to engage, and their fixt resolution to conquer, or die. And my reason for putting this construction on *Homer's* *κατακομωτες Αχαιοι* is the following story from *Herodotus*³.

F f 4

WHEN

Vid. Constant. Lexic. in verb. *κατακομω*.

³ *Ηρόδ. Περσικα.*



WHEN Xerxes sent a horseman to observe the *Lacedemonian* army, a little before the battle of *Thermopylae*, he found them, some exercising themselves at gymnastic games, and others combing their hair. A singularity which very much amazed the horseman (*ταυτα δὲ θεωρῶν ἐθαύμαζε*) whom they let depart quietly, conceiving the utmost contempt of him. Xerxes himself, when it was related to him, was as much at a loss to guess at the reasons of this conduct; which was so unlike the customs of other countries, that though he thought it something extremely ridiculous (*αὐτῷ γελοία γὰρ ἐφαίνοντο τοῖσιν*) it raised his curiosity so much, as to send for *Demaratus*, a *Lacedemonian* prince then in his camp, to know of him the reason of it. Which *Demaratus* tells him in these words, *νομος γὰρ σφίσι οὕτω ἔχοντες ἐπὶ τὰν μάλασι κινδυνεύειν τῇ ψυχῇ, τότε τὰς κεφαλὰς κοσμεῖνται*; "it is a custom among them, that when they are determined to put their lives to the extreme hazard, they then adorn their heads." *Demaratus* uses a different word from what *Herodotus* says the horseman saw: They were then only putting their hair in order with a comb.



comb) (τοὺς δὲ τοὺς κομὰς κτενίζομενους) and neither of the expressions has in it the least idea of any thing terrible. It is not improbable they considered themselves as victims just going to be sacrificed; and therefore dressed themselves in the manner the creatures were dressed up, which were devoted to that purpose. And how generously they did sacrifice their lives for the good of their country, the history of that glorious battle informs us. And one can hardly think their appearance in that manner in the field, could have so very different an effect from what was the real intention of it in the city. For *Lycurgus* expressly "accused them to it, to render the handsome more beautiful, and the ugly more frightful," ος εἰδὼς τοὺς πολίτας κομᾶν, οτι τοὺς μὲν καλοὺς εὐπρεπεστεροὺς ποιεῖ, τοὺς αἰσχροὺς φαβερωτεροὺς.

Πλουτ. ἀποφθεγ. Λυκούργ.

To such a people, and on such an occasion, the apostle would not have said that if they took care of their hair it were a shame to them; but on the contrary, would have celebrated their virtue on that account. And there is a passage in *Aristotle's rhetoric* of that very kind, in which he says, that " in

“ in *Lacedaemon* long hair was a mark of  
 “ honour, and sign of liberty; and it was  
 “ not easy for a person that wore it to do  
 “ a base thing,” *ἐν Λακεδαιμονίᾳ κομὴν*  
*καλὴν, εὐγενείας γὰρ σημεῖον. οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶ*  
*κομῶντα βλάβον οὐδὲν ποιεῖν ἐργὸν ἀντίκον.*

Lib. i.

BUT if we enquire into the different motives why other persons took the same care of their hair, we shall see the apostle had good ground for what he advances.

It is generally one part of the character of an effeminate, lewd, fellow to do so, both among the *Greek*, and *Latin* writers. When *Paris* retreated at the sight of *Menelaus* before the walls of *Troy*, *Hector*, enraged at his cowardice, reproaches him in the severest terms “ for the distress  
 “ which, by his scandalous rape of *Helen*,  
 “ he had brought upon his father, the  
 “ city, and all the people; for his not  
 “ having now courage, though he had  
 “ dared to take the brave *Menelaus*’s wife  
 “ from him, either to defend *her*, or look  
 “ *him* in the face; for the despicable figure  
 “ he made by this retreat, insomuch that  
 “ it had been better for him never to have  
 “ been

“ been born, or, at least, that he had pe-  
 “ rished before his marriage.” And then  
 asks him, with a sneer, “ whether it was  
 “ possible he could be the same person who  
 “ had engaged, not only his own compa-  
 “ nions, but strangers too, to risque their  
 “ fortunes with him in the fleet that  
 “ brought away the beautiful wife of that  
 “ warlike hero ?” at the same time scof-  
 “ fing at him for “ the effeminacy of his  
 “ person, his care of his hair, and excel-  
 “ ling in all the gifts of *Venus*.”

It would be too long to transcribe the  
 whole passage, I shall only mention those  
 lines wherein the effeminacy of his per-  
 son, and the baseness of his mind, are  
 described.

Δυσπαρ, Ειδος αριστε, γυναιμανες, πωρεσπειλα,

Ηπου καυχλωσι καρηκομωντες Αχαιοι,

Φαντες αριστη προμον εμμεναι, ουνεκα καλον

Ειδος επ, αλλ ουκ εστι Βη φρεσιν, ουδε τις

αλη

Ουκ αν τοι χραισμη κιδaris, τα τε δωρ Αφρ

δότης,

Ητε ΚΟΜΗ.

ΙΧ. Γ.

Horace



*Horace seems to have these lines in his eye.*

*Nequicquam Veneris praesidio ferax*

*Pectus caesariem : grataque feminis*

*Imbelli citharâ carmina divides*

*Nequicquam thalamo graves*

*Hastas, et calami spicula Gnosii*

*Vitabis, strepitumque et celerem sequi*

*Ajacem. Tamen, heu, serus adulteros*

*Crines pulvere collines.*

*Carm. Lib. i. Od. 15.*

To the apostle's purpose, Chabotius observes upon this passage, *Crines proprie sunt mulierum, quae discernuntur vittis ; et Pectus dicuntur aro διαπρωτος, a discretionem. Caesaries autem est virorum, a caedendo, ut ipsos decet.* Whether there be so strict a difference between these two words, I will not take upon me to determine; but there is certainly that difference in the hair of the male, and female, in almost all antique bustos, and paintings, and medals.

MILTON's portrait of Adam and Eve, expresses this distinction better than any thing else that can be said upon it.

His fair large front, and eye sublime, declar'd  
Absolute rule, and hyacinthian locks

Round



Round from his parted forelock manly hung  
Clustering, but not beneath his shoulders  
broad.

She, as a veil, down to the slender waist  
Her unadorned golden tresses wore  
Dishevel'd; but in wanton ringlets wav'd,  
As the vine curls her tendrils; which imply'd  
Subjection,

*Parad. Lost, B. iv.*

**APOLLO** indeed is always represented with flowing hair, something like women,

*Crinibus insignem, quis acuta cuspide Phoebum  
Instruat*

*Ov. Amor. i. Eleg. i.*

but that is only to distinguish him as a youth, between whom, and the other sex, there was still a difference according to *Ovid*,

*Nec mihi materia est numeris levioribus apta*

*Aut puer, aut longas compta puella comas.*

And not only was there a difference in the length of the hair, but the women dressed and ornamented theirs in a manner that men ordinarily did not; to which custom

custom Milton alludes, when he says her *unadorned golden tresses*; braiding it down, interweaving the locks either with one another, or else with laces, and ribbands of gold, or silver, or divers colours, bringing them again over their heads, and fastening them with a bodkin into a knot at the hinder parts, At festivals, and upon any publick rejoicings, or in their amours, they anointed them with an oil, or perfume, of myrrh. Every one of which customs is mentioned by the poets.

*I, pete unguentum, puer, et coronas,  
Et cadum Marſi memorem duelli,  
Sparticum ſi qua potuit vagantem  
Fallere teſta.*

*Dic et argutae properet Negerae  
Myrrbeum nodo prohibere crinem.*

Hor. Carm. Lib. iii. Od. 14.

*Cui flavam religas comam*

*Simplex munditiis*

Id. Lib. i. Od. 5.

*Indutus chlamydem Tyriam, quam limbus obibat  
Aureus, ornabant aurata monilia collum;  
Et madidos myrrhæ, curvum crinale capillos*

Ov. Metam. v. 53.

Κομαι χαριτεσσιν ομοιαι,  
Πλοχμοι οδὲ χρυσῷ τε, καὶ ἀργυρῷ ἐσθλῶντο.  
OM. IX. P.

and we find St. Paul, and St. Peter, exhorting the christian women not to indulge to these things, so far as thereby to endanger the neglect of the more amiable ornaments of the mind, "that women adorn themselves,—not with broidered, or plaited hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, but—with good works."

In as much then as an effeminate, dissolute life, and the customs used at revelings and riotings, must always be dishonourable to men; this of nourishing their hair, which was done for such purposes, will, as in the apostle's estimation, be so too: And as far as it is disgraceful to women to affect the manners and customs of the other sex, so, on the contrary, to wear long hair, whereby to express their modesty, subjection, and native beauty, will be "their glory."

AND this is a subject well worthy of an Apostolical pen; good moralists having al-



always discouraged, and forbid, every thing, however innocent in itself, that is generally abused to vitious purposes. *Plato* banished poetry and music out of his commonwealth, notwithstanding they are both very fine accomplishments, and have been employed to the noblest purposes, in the service of God, and to the incitement of the most generous virtue; because he found them more frequently abused, as incentives to luxury and effeminacy.

AND therefore as indifferent as habits may seem to be, in themselves, the *Jewish* and other law-givers have severely prohibited either of the sexes using the habit of the other. "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God." How infamous did *P. Clodius* render himself among the *Romans*, for intruding into the mysteries of *Bona Dea* in woman's apparel, in order to converse with *Pompeia*, *Caesar's* wife, with whom he was in love? Every school-boy knows the proverb, *Clodius accusat moechos*.



THE other thing in this paragraph that seems difficult, is, how "a man praying, or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head;" and if the apostle had been in that position, as in what I have been considering, appealing to nature, or custom, it would be unfurmountable; for not only the *Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans*, most usually performed their sacred rites, as is evident from antiquity, and from many medals still extant in the cabinets of the curious, with their heads covered; but the *Jews* too, and so they continue to do in their synagogues to this day. It is therefore worth remarking, that tho' he appeals to the *Corinthians* to judge in themselves whether "it be comely for a woman to pray to God with her head uncover'd," he makes no such appeal with regard to the men; nor does it appear, as Mr. Mede observes, that the men had been faulty in that respect, but the apostle mentions it as an argument *à pari*, to introduce his censure and correction of the women. And what he advances on that head is one of the things which he calls "ordinances," ver 2.

G. g.

which,

which, by the Spirit of God, he gave, upon particular occasions, as they occur'd; which they themselves had no *data* to reason upon; but yet were, in reality, not without peculiar reasons, which he explains.

WITH regard to this then, it seems to be a custom peculiar to the *christian religion*, founded on the new relation they stood in to Jesus Christ, (for "dishonouring their heads," does not relate to themselves, but in the woman it relates to the man, and in the man to Christ.) Whole religion being conformable to the strictest reasoning, and the exactest truth, alter'd nothing of the original constitution of God; but preserv'd every thing just as it was from the beginning, the man in his superiority, and the woman in her subjection. And therefore it was a dishonour done to Christ, who was now become the head of the church, to imagine his religion had made the least change in the relation of the man and the woman, or that the man was less her superior now than before; so little foundation had the pretence on which the *Corinthian* women seem to have gone in throwing off their veils. And that, as his religion had abrogated all superstitious rites and

ceremonies, and did not consist of external appearances, but “ of the hidden man of “ the heart,” no one should think that even God was the least honoured, by man’s laying aside the mark of superiority, tho’ in his immediate presence. For *that* were a superstition not consistent with the rational worship of christianity; which ought to be conducted in the most natural, sober, solemn mood imaginable, and with the greatest manliness and decency. And as the apostle forbids the women, for the reasons already mentioned, to appear in their assemblies without the *Power*, or mark of subjection, on their heads; it was an ordinance of great propriety and prudence, that the men, “ who are the image and glory “ of God,” should appear there with the mark of superiority, *i. e. uncovered*; for otherwise, there would still remain the appearance of equality.

CONTRARY to which, perhaps, the reason why the *Egyptians*, *Greeks*, and *Romans*, at least, if not the *Jews*, worshipped, as was just now said, with their heads covered, was in token of their subjection to the Deity, and on purpose to lay aside all other distinctions whatsoever.



**T**HIS then being the general nature of the apostle's reasoning upon this subject, I proceed to inquire into the more particular, and minute reason he gives, why women should by no means throw off their Veils, "BECAUSE OF THE ANGELS."

No one will doubt but that all religious observances should be done "decently and in order;" and that, especially at the first establishment of christianity, *christians* should guard against every thing that was immodest or indecent; and we have seen why womens throwing off their Veils was thought so. But why should it be *because of the angels*?—The apostle's authority, injoining them not to do it, had been sufficient; but he adds this, as something which they would understand, and immediately assent to.

THOSE who think it was founded on a notion that was pretty common among the *Jews*, that angels were present at their religious assemblies, make but a lame argument of it. For, besides that this is indeed a mere notion, with no authority to support it; it is extremely strange the apostle should



should exact a superior deference to *them*, which looks something like idolatry, than to the Almighty Being worshipped there, who is said "to charge them with folly," and in whose presence they are represented as "veiling their faces." The passage refer'd to in the margin of the bible, *Eccles. v. 6.* does not make the argument a whit more plain, "suffer not thy mouth to make thy flesh to sin, neither say thou before the angel that it was an error." And besides, the Syriac, and Arabic, according to the Polyglotte, and the Septuagint translate it *before God*: Or if it be rightly translated with us, it must be meant of "the angel of the covenant;" therefore emphatically called THE ANGEL.

NOR is their account of it much more intelligible, who make it an argument of charity in favour of the angels; some of them having been thought to have fallen from heaven on account of their lusting after the daughters of men, *Gen. vi. 4.* which *Tertullian*, not unpleasantly, says, is a stronger reason for virgins being veil'd than for women, *quarum flos jam humanam libidinem excusat; debet ergo adumbrari facies tam periculosa, quæ usque ad coelum*

*scandala jaculata est* \*. — It is enough to say in answer to this account, that *the sons of God*, there mention'd, do not mean *angels*; but those who were call'd *sons of God*, because the families they came of were distinguish'd from other men, by the knowledge and worship of the one God, from which they degenerated afterwards, by marrying into idolatrous families. Nor is it easy to conceive how, upon any notion of angels as spiritual beings, the Veil could possibly hide the faces of the women, or take away the temptation, if any temptation there was.

LASTLY, those who think they were to keep them on, in remembrance of the fall of *Eve* at the suggestion of evil angels, seem not to take notice, or else they forget, that it was but *one* evil spirit that had any hand in her immediate temptation; who is therefore always emphatically call'd in scripture, *the serpent, satan, the devil*; and it is probable if the apostle had meant him, he would have call'd him by one or other of these names. But even if he had, the argument does not seem to be an intelligible one; and *that is with me an insuperable objection to them all.*

LET

\* Tert. de veland. virgin.

LET us see then whether the word *αγγελος* may be otherwise understood, so as to make it more plain and obvious. Lexicons will tell us it signifies *angelus*, *nuntius*, *index*. Will it be an intelligible argument then in either of these latter senses? I think it will; and shall shew,

THAT the word is us'd in the *New Testament* in the same sense as a *Spie*, in the strictest meaning of it; and often, both there and in the *Septuagint*, for a *Messenger*;

THAT strangers, who might be Spies or Messengers, either *did* come to their assemblies to observe their behaviour; or at least it was suppos'd by the apostle they *might* come, in the very argument he is upon, which does not conclude till the end of the 14th chapter; and lastly,

THAT he could not have us'd a better motive for christians behaving *with decency*, than on *their* account, that they might *report* nothing to their disadvantage.

Now tho' I should produce ever so many places out of profane writers, where the word *αγγελος* is us'd in the same sense as a *Spie*; particularly, in the second Play of *Aeschylus* the old Greek Tragedian, called



# A critical dissertation

*Enla et Enlais*, the character of *Agapēos* *καλασνοτες* runs through the whole: Yet, according to the common rules of criticism, one passage from the *New Testament* will be thought to outweigh many from them. I shall therefore principally insist on the story in scripture of the spies which *Joshua* sent to *Jericho* (and there is no story of Spies, properly so call'd, in *history*, that could be more to the purpose) whom *Rabab* the harlot lodged, and hid, and, search being made after them, "sent out another way;" related *Josh. ii.* and *vi.* and refer'd to, *Heb. xi. 31.* and *James ii. 25.*

THE persons sent to *Joshua* are call'd מרגלים (*mrglim hish*) *exploratores occulti*, or more literally from the Hebrew, *clam exploratores*, from שרש (*hish*) *surdum agere*, to act the part of a deaf man incapable of receiving information. And the Septuagint says they were sent *καλασνοτες* τῶν γυν. And the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews*, mentioning this circumstance as an instance of *Rabab's* faith, uses the same expression as the Septuagint *καλασνοτοι*.—But *St. James*, when he has occasion to speak of the same story, calls them



them by the word before us, ἀποδεξαμεν  
ΤΟΥΣ ΑΓΓΕΛΟΥΣ, chap. ii. 25.

SHOULD it be said, this does not prove that ἀγγελος should be translated a Spie; I shall only reply, that the שׂרֵי צְבָאוֹת, or καλασκοποι of the one, and the ἀγγελοι of the other, are *the same persons*; and I believe had our translators render'd St. James's words *received the Spies*, no one would have objected to it; and whatever objections can be brought to St. Paul's using ἀγγελος in *that* sense in the passage before us, I will venture to retort on St. James's using it in the passage I have quoted; the persons he speaks of, having carry'd no message to the city of Jericho, nor doing any thing more than "looking about, to make a report to Joshua upon their return." And I am sure καλασκοπεῖν has no other signification than *looking about*, whether it be with more, or less reserve.

AND as to the other meaning, that of a *Messenger*; there are so many instances both in the Septuagint, and the *New Testament*, that it would be tedious to enumerate them. Particularly, the men who brought the tidings of his misfortunes to *Job*, are every one of them call'd ἀγγελος:

So are St. John's disciples whom he sent to Jesus to ask, "art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" ἀπελθόντων δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων Ἰωάννου, John vii. 24. Now tho' the word messenger, in the *English* Language, generally carries the idea of being sent; that idea is not at all necessary to the words ἀγγελος, or *mun-tius*, each being derived from a verb which signifies simply and barely to tell, or to relate; nor could any of the messengers to Job be sent, because it is part of the message of each of them, "and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

AND therefore I think, no farther doubt can remain of this being the meaning of the word in the passage before us, when I have shown, as I proceed to do, that strangers either *did* come to their assemblies; or it was suppos'd by the apostle they *might* come, in the very argument he is upon, which does not conclude till the end of ch. xiv. To which, from the beginning of this eleventh, is one continu'd, connected discourse; wherein he corrects some gross abuses which had crept into their publick worship;

FIRST,

FIRST, the indecent manner in which their women appear'd there; from the beginning of ch. xi. to ver. 16;

SECONDLY, their divisions, and intemperance at their love-feasts; from thence to the end of the chapter;

AND lastly, their mistakes about the spiritual gifts imparted to them for the edification of the church; but which some of them, it seems, coveted more out of pride, and an affectation of superiority; from the beginning of the 12th, to the end of the 14th chapter.

ALL which would be too long to transcribe; but if the reader will give himself the trouble to peruse the whole, I believe he will find the apostle is, in most places, correcting their irregularities *on principles of decency*, and on account of the ill appearance they made. It is evidently so in the paragraph before us, as has been already fully shewn.

AND in the next, their behaviour at their love-feasts and the Lord's supper; he remonstrates to them how indecent, as well as irreligious, it was, for the rich to bring such plentiful suppers merely for themselves apart, and eat of them to excess in the manner



manner they did, so as to *despise*, or bring into contempt, the church of God, and put those out of countenance whose circumstances were too strait to allow them to feast in the same manner; a practice God had suffer'd them to fall into, that the good and upright might, by that contrast, appear in their true character in the midst of the rest, ver. 19. *δεῖ γὰρ καὶ αἰσχροῖς ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι, ἵνα οἱ δοξαστοὶ φανεροὶ γένωσι ἐν ὑμῖν.* After reprovng which, he goes on to show, that in truth *this* was not to eat the Lord's supper at all; and *that* was the reason of the evils they labour'd under, &c.

ON the last head, their abuses of the spiritual gifts bestow'd on them for the edification of the church, he is more large and full; showing the opinion strangers must entertain of them from thence, and the probable reports they would make of their behaviour, according as they persisted in, or amended, those irregularities; concluding the argument, relating to all the three heads mention'd, with a general precept, "Let all things be done *εὐδοκίμως*, decently," and with a fair appearance: "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak  
" with



" with tongues, and there come in those  
 " that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will  
 " they not say that ye are mad? But if  
 " all prophesy, and there come in one that  
 " believeth not, or one unlearned, he is  
 " convinced of all, he is judged of all:  
 " And thus are the secrets of his heart  
 " made manifest; and so falling down on  
 " his face, he will worship God, and re-  
 " port that God is in you of a truth," ver.  
 23, 24, 25.

THE persons who are here suppos'd to  
 come in, are the *unlearned*, who are like-  
 wise mention'd, ver. 16, and *unbelievers*.  
 Now though the *unlearned*, i. e. persons  
 ignorant of any other language but their  
 own, for in both places he is speaking of  
 the gift of tongues, may mean either those  
 who were, or those who were not, of their  
 own society; the others, *unbelievers*, must  
 be those only of other religions, either  
*Jews*, or *Heathens*, who came or were  
 sent out of curiosity, to see the manner  
 and method of their worship; and are  
 suppos'd to *make a report* to others, both  
 of what they saw, and the judgment they  
 pass'd thereupon. In the one case, if they  
 did nothing but *speak with tongues*, it is  
 probable

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probable they would not only think within themselves, but *tell abroad*, ερουσιν, that they were a company of madmen. In the other, if *they prophesy'd*, so that their discourses reach'd the consciences, and the secret thoughts of the hearts, of the ignorant, or the unbeliever; he would probably immediately fall down on his face, and worship God; and afterwards, *report*, επαγγελων, from the very same theme as αγγελος, the word under consideration, "that God is in them of a truth." Exactly the same business with *Joshua's Spies*.

SHOULD it be said, that the heathens were too ignorant of the manner of worship among the christians, and their accounts of them too absurd, to render it probable, they ever either went, or sent, or gave themselves any trouble, to enquire about them; that even *Pliny* himself, above a century after the first preaching of christianity, knew not what account to give of them to *Trajan*, and was forced to "put two of their own deaconesses to the rack" to find out their opinions; I answer, the fact is not necessary to the argument; the presumption, and probability, *that*

that they might send, is sufficient. It is no proof that a man actually did come to a feast, or an engagement; that his host, or his enemy were prepared for his reception.

HOWEVER, the heathens were not the only persons within the supposition. We read *Gal. ii. 4.* of "false brethren who came in privily," or by stealth, on purpose to spy out "the liberty which they had in Christ Jesus;" and it may be justly supposed, considering what opposition *St. Paul* had met with, particularly at *Corinth*, *Galatia*, and *Philippi*, how glad his ill-wishers would be to take hold of any advantage against him, and how great reason he had therefore to exhort all his proselytes to peculiar circumspection, and decency of behaviour.

AND if it is possible that either messengers, and spies, or strangers, who came into their assemblies out of ordinary curiosity, whatever quarter either of them might come from, should go away and report, (and that supposition alone would be sufficient to establish the criticism, see p. 458.) that, tho' the christians pretended to uncommon purity and decency, their mysteries



ries were like those of the heathens, the women throwing off their Veils, and with them the peculiar modesty of the sex; the heathens themselves could have no inducement to examine farther into their religion, than by inrolling, as they offer'd to do, Jesus Christ into the number of their gods. And the *Jews*, who were separated from the nations by customs as opposite to theirs as might be, to answer the wise purposes of providence in that separation, would receive a very just, and unanswerable prejudice against it. And in either case, its end must be wholly defeated.

NOR could he have us'd a more powerful argument with the female sex not to do so; than that drawn from *decency*, there being in them a natural modesty, and an amiable shamefacedness, that would be peculiarly sensible to such a consideration.

LET us see then how the argument will stand with this interpretation. For the clearer perception of which, I shall take the liberty to transpose this 11th verse, and rather insert it between the 15th and 16th. For it is a very judicious observation of Mr. *Locke* in his *essay for the understanding*



understanding St. Paul's epistles, see that  
 " he was a man of quick thought, warm  
 " temper, mighty well vers'd in the writ-  
 " ings of the *Old Testament*, and full of  
 " the doctrine of the *New* : All this put  
 " together suggested matter to him in abun-  
 " dance on those subjects which came in  
 " his way ; so that one may consider him  
 " when he was writing, as beset with a  
 " crowd of thoughts, all striving for utter-  
 " ance. In this posture of mind it was  
 " almost impossible for him to keep that  
 " slow pace, and observe minutely that or-  
 " der and method of ranging all he said,  
 " from which results an easy and obvious  
 " perspicuity. To this plenty and vehe-  
 " mence of his, may be imputed those  
 " many large parentheses, which a careful  
 " reader may observe in his epistles. Upon  
 " this account also it is, that he often  
 " breaks off in the middle of an argument,  
 " to let in some new thought suggested by  
 " his own words ; which having pursued  
 " and explained, as far as conduc'd to his  
 " present purpose, he reassumes again the  
 " thread of his discourse, and goes on with  
 " it, without taking any notice that he  
 " returns again to what he had been before  
 " saying : tho' sometimes it be so far off

H h

" that

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"that it may well have slipped out of his  
 "mind, and requires a very attentive ear  
 "to observe, and to bring the disjointed  
 "members together, as to make up the  
 "connection, and see how the scatter'd  
 "parts of the discourse hang together in a  
 "coherent, well agreeing sense that makes  
 "it all of a piece."

"When this liberty then, the paragraph  
 "will run thus:

"Now I praise you, brethren, that you  
 "remember me in all things, and keep  
 "the ordinances, as I delivered them to  
 "you. But I would have you know, that  
 "the head of every man is Christ; and  
 "the head of the woman is the man;  
 "and the head of Christ is God. Every  
 "man praying or prophesying, having his  
 "head cover'd, dishonoureth his head.  
 "But every woman that prayeth or pro-  
 "phesieth with her head uncover'd, dis-  
 "honoureth her head; for that is even  
 "all one as if she were shaven. For if  
 "the woman be not cover'd, let her also  
 "be shorn; but if it be a shame for a  
 "woman to be shorn or shaven, let her  
 "be cover'd. For a man indeed ought  
 "not to cover his head, forasmuch as he  
 "is the image and glory of God. But the  
 "woman

"woman is the glory of the man. For  
 "the man is not of the woman. But the  
 "woman of the man. Neither was the  
 "man created for the woman. But the  
 "woman for the man. Nevertheless, nei-  
 "ther is the man without the woman;  
 "neither the woman without the man in  
 "the Lord. For as the woman is of the  
 "man, even so is the man also by the wo-  
 "man: But all things of God. Judge in  
 "yourselves. Is it comely that a woman  
 "pray unto God uncover'd? Doth not  
 "even nature itself teach you, that if a  
 "man have long hair, it is a shame unto  
 "him? But if a woman have long hair,  
 "it is a glory to her: For her hair is given  
 "her for a covering. For this cause ought  
 "the woman to have power on her head,  
 "because of persons who may report your  
 "behaviour abroad. But if any man seems  
 "to be contentious, we have no such  
 "custom, neither the churches of God."  
 "How plain, how simple, how concise,  
 "(and that is what the apostle often studies,  
 "and thereby sometimes renders himself ob-  
 "scure) and how well connected is the argu-  
 "ment in this light? "It is contrary to  
 "what is every where reputed decent, for  
 "the woman not to nourish her hair. For  
 "this



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"this cause let her appear in the usual fashion in your religious assemblies, that there may be no report spread in the world to your disadvantage." And I am persuaded, had it always stood in the order I have placed it, (but whether its standing as it does was owing to the vehemency of the apostle himself, or the hurry of any copyist, is impossible to say) it would never have been mistaken; or such strange constructions put upon it as we have seen.

**N**OW tho' I am aware of some objections that will be rais'd; and cannot say that *αγγελος* is the most accurate word the apostle could have chose; yet as it will bear the interpretation I have put upon it, and is an exceeding good argument in that sense, nay, the plainest and best that could be urg'd, but is not intelligible in any other; I must declare for myself, I am firmly persuaded it was his meaning, being much more solicitous about the justness of his sentiment, than the elegant choice of his language.

**A**ND I am the rather persuaded of this, as there is no similar word in the *Greek* tongue, for which it can be suppos'd to be mistaken by any transcriber; Mr. *Le Clerc's* conjecture, that it should be read *δια τῆς ἀγγελίας*

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being without the least foundation; and even if it was allow'd, not making the argument in the least more plain, and intelligible, unless it results in that which I have offer'd; for both which reasons I have taken no other notice of it in the course of these papers: And I do not remember to have met with any other criticism on the word.

**S**HOULD any one from this passage raise a scruple of conscience, and teach that women ought *now* to wear *Veils*, and that it would be a sin for them to appear at church in any other dress: It is sufficient to tell them, the apostle is only arguing for decency; and that whatever is reputed decent, and sober, in the country where we live<sup>b</sup>, answers the end to all intents and purposes. People have often lost the meaning and spirit of christianity, by too rigid an adherence to the letter of it.

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## A P P E N D I X.

**S**INCE the first publishing this dissertation, I have the pleasure to find many gentlemen of excellent sense, and great learning, agree entirely with me

<sup>a</sup> See the Appendix. <sup>b</sup> If *stovus*, as seems to me most probable, is formed from *stet licet*; it might have been better translated, the *customary dress*, than *power*.

in sentiment upon this difficult text. Particularly, the ingenious authors of the *Free and Candid Disquisition*, &c. have so far given their sanction to it, as to propose to have it inserted in a new translation of the bible; which, I entirely agree with them, is much wanted, as the best comments and criticisms on both the Old and New Testaments have been written long since the last Translation, besides great numbers of emendations proposed by the learned in works of various kinds.

However, I must own, I have found others who have with-held their assent to it, tho' I have not heard a single reason urged against it; and therefore can impute it to nothing but the novelty and singularity of the criticism. These gentlemen then I must acquaint, that within these few days, there was put into my hands a book, entitled, *Historico-Philologico-Theologica*, published at Bremen, in the year 1702, in which are the thoughts of a learned Dutch divine upon this text, of whom my worthy friend the Rev. Mr. Birch, on whose knowledge and fidelity in curious anecdotes of this kind, every man of the least polite reading will entirely depend, has given me the following account:

GERARD

• See p. 84. 2d edit.

GERARD GROESE, was a native of Amsterdam, and educated at Leyden, and in his return from his voyage to Smyrna, was offer'd the place of minister of the Dutch church at Norwich; but preferring a settlement in his own country, was afterwards appointed minister at Alblas near Dore, where he died in 1710, at the age of sixty eight years, with the character of a man of great learning. The publishers of the before-mentioned work, tell us, that the learned world is obliged to him for two books, the one entitled, *Historia Synonymorum*, the other *Historia Ebraica*. This writer has given exactly the same opinion of the passage with me, and supported it by nearly the same authorities out of the New Testament, and refer'd, for this use of the word *ayyēlos*, not only to *Aeschylus*, but likewise to *Homer*, *Euripides*, and *Sophocles*, and concludes, with saying that, as some have offer'd their different readings, (tho' he sees no manner of occasion for any,) yet if it must be so, he would propose the word *ayyēlos*, that is, *offerers*. On which I make no remarks; it is not perhaps a classical word. Let the learned judge as they please.

I SHALL therefore now hope that the sense of this passage is fixt, and that it appears





appears to be plain and obvious; for the dis-  
 positions commonly made, ascertain, as  
 have observed, no meaning at all. Mr.  
*Upton* in his critical observations on *Shake-  
 spear*, published in 1746, says, "The  
 Jews had a sort of romances among  
 them, that told them tales of angels  
 falling in love with women; and that  
 some of the *Rabbins* say *Eve* was so  
 beautiful, that the prince of angels fell  
 in love with her, which occasioned his  
 fall. Now these stories were believed by  
 the women in the apostles time; he puts  
 them in mind therefore of these received  
 opinions, and condescends to REASON  
 on their own hypothesis: For the angels  
 sake than veil your faces." I wish the  
 learned writer had shewn wherein the rea-  
 soning lay; for I must own, of all the ac-  
 counts given of the text, this appears to  
 me the most unworthy of the apostle.  
 Women, who were capable of believing so  
 silly a story, I should imagine, would not  
 so easily be prevailed upon to part with a  
 favourite hypothesis, that did such honour  
 to their vanity. The apostle would have  
 rather reprov'd and check'd them with  
 high authority.

See p. 30.



No. 11. S.



